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Fund for Teachers Announces San Francisco's Plank Fellowship Award Winner

National non-profit also names 2009 Fellows to Travel This Summer

May 5 – (San Francisco) Celebrating America's top teachers on National Teacher Day, Fund for Teachers today named Erin Goodling, teacher at Civic Center Secondary School, San Francisco's Plank Fellowship Award winner.

Named for Fund for Teachers' Founder Raymond Plank, the Plank Fellowship Award is given annually to the teacher who made the most of their summer odyssey (which he/she designed and Fund for Teachers made possible) upon returning to the classroom.

Last summer, Erin designed a fellowship that enabled her to live on a small homestead farm in Umbria, Italy, to foster cooking experiences for her interdisciplinary curriculum, inform the development of an urban garden, inspire a reverence for healthy individuals and communities, and set a tone for collaboration among students and colleagues in the social service agency where she teaches 60 homeless students. Upon returning to San Francisco, Erin created weekly cooking sessions to teach students about budgeting, culinary techniques, menu planning, local and seasonal produce, and interpersonal communications. She also led her students in the construction of an urban garden at one of the agency housing sites, empowering students to plant and harvest their own fresh vegetables and herbs and witness the food cycle first-hand. She led students in planning and cooking lunch for homeless youth once a week last fall and this spring and created a student intern position at the garden, supervising him 20 hours a week through the fall and winter. (He is now a member of the California Conservation Corps.) After assuming the role of "Garden Project Coordinator" at Larkin Street Youth Services, she applied for grants to begin a community-focused garden program at an alternative school in Portland, OR, and was selected as one of four teachers for World Savvy Global Educators Program's fellowship.

"I was immersed in an Italian culture that closely observes and depends upon the symbiotic relationships between plants, animals, and the landscape. I remembered to slow down and observe the world around me, to value intergenerational learning, to learn from immersion rather than always referring to textbooks or the Internet," said Erin. And speaking of the agency's new urban garden, Erin added, "What used to be a drab carport filled with decaying fast food wrappers and brambles is now a magical place for students to convene, to learn about seeds and planting techniques, to harvest inspiration for poems and essays, and to provide healthy ingredients for home-cooked meals."

Fund for Teachers named Corey Pickering, Millennium High School in Manhattan, its national Plank Fellowship Award winner. Additional winners from the nonprofit's partner programs include: Kathy Clunis, Boston; Trey Thames, Houston; Cindy Coughlin and Sandra Collins, Expeditionary Learning Schools; Ziomara Perez and Megan Whitney, Chicago; Melody Afill and Donna McChesney, Oklahoma; Donna McSweeney and Lynn Talamini, Rural School and Community Trust; Robert Jeffers, Los Angeles; and Julie Anderson, Oakland.

Fund for Teachers also announced today its list of 2009 grant recipients. Descriptions of the new Fellows' upcoming odysseys, as well as how the Plank Fellowship Award winners implemented their 2008 fellowships, are available at <http://www.fundforteachers.org/press.html>.

Made possible by individual and corporate donors, Fund for Teachers has awarded more than \$12 million in grants to approximately 3,500 of America's top educators over the past nine years. Based in Houston, Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of America's top teachers as they identify and pursue opportunities around the world that will have the greatest impact on themselves, their students and their communities. For more information on how you can make teachers' dreams a reality, visit www.fundforteachers.org.

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