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**For Immediate Release**

**KENTUCKY TO SPONSOR CHARACTER EDUCATION AWARDS**

*The Character Council of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky has joined 26 other state organizations in sponsoring State Schools of Character Awards.*

May 12, 2009... Cincinnati, OH – State Schools of Character awards are an extension of the National Schools of Character program sponsored by the Character Education Partnership (CEP) in Washington, D.C. The Character Council of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky, a local non-profit organization, has been selected by CEP to promote the award throughout Kentucky. The Character Council provides training and character development resources to enhance school culture and to help teachers integrate character lessons into the classroom.

Since 1998, CEP has annually recognized approximately 10 public and private schools and districts (K–12) as National Schools of Character (NSOC.) Winners of the national award receive a financial grant to enhance their work in character education and to share their expertise with others. In 2006, CEP launched the State Schools of Character (SSOC) project with state sponsors offering SSOC awards. The purpose of both the national and state awards is to identify outstanding schools and districts to serve as models for other schools and districts seeking to improve their character education efforts.

SSOC win an award from the state sponsor and the opportunity to move forward to the NSOC competition. The state-level awards have proved an effective means of enhancing character education initiatives in participating states. By identifying exemplary sites on the state level, the SSOC project helps to develop a state-level mentoring network among educators. CEP and state sponsors use the same criteria to judge applications: CEP's *Character Education Quality Standards*. The deadline for the SSOC/NSOC applications is **December 1, 2009**.

Dr. Phil Brown, director of the Center for Social and Character Development at Rutgers University, speaks for New Jersey, which had 20 applications in 2009, more than any other state. He says, "One of the unexpected benefits of the State Schools of Character program is that it serves as a way to identify pockets of excellent practice, which enables us to enrich the quality of professional networking across the state."

CEP will honor the 2009 NSOC winners at its National Forum on Character Education on October 29-31 in the Washington, D.C. area ([www.character.org/forum](http://www.character.org/forum)). CEP highlights the winners' stories in an annual NSOC publication and on CEP's website.

The SSOC/NSOC application process is rigorous, requiring extensive reporting, documentation, and assessment of each school or district's culture, academics, and efforts to infuse core values into every aspect of school life. Winners represent an array of programs in service learning, bullying prevention, mentoring, and tolerance. Winners' assessment of the results within their schools provide evidence that quality character education impacts not only academics but also social and emotional learning.

The Character Education Partnership, based in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to helping schools develop people of good character for a just and compassionate society. CEP is the nation's leading advocate for quality character education initiatives. To learn more about CEP and the National Schools of Character, visit [www.character.org](http://www.character.org).

The Character Council of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky is a local nonprofit, non-religious organization whose mission is to foster character development in children and adults as a foundation for success in life. The Character Council works with organizations to facilitate positive cultural change, contributing to an enhanced society through an unwavering focus on good character.

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