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**CHAPTER OF THE LARGEST ACADEMIC PROMOTION OF
BLACK YOUTH IN AMERICA – NYC ACT-SO – PREPS, SEEKS
STUDENTS FOR APRIL 23 “OLYMPICS OF THE MIND”**

***Weekly Enrichment Workshops Polish Pupils for 18TH Annual NYC Competition;
2005 Season the First Since Passing of National Program Creator Vernon Jarrett***

New York, NY – February 28, 2005 – Some 200 enthusiastic Black high school students from throughout the New York metropolitan area will converge under one roof to showcase their talents in the humanities, arts, and sciences at the 18th annual *Olympics of the Mind* competition set for Saturday, April 23, 2005 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Manhattan’s Martin Luther King Jr. High School, 122 Amsterdam Avenue, between 65th and 66th streets. **The New York City chapter of the NAACP Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics (NYC ACT-SO), proud sponsor of the *Olympics of the Mind*, also will host the competition’s VIP Reception & Awards Ceremony to follow on Monday, April 25 at Con Edison, 4 Irving Place in Lower Manhattan. The VIP Reception (invitation only) will be from 5 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., and the Awards Ceremony (open to the public with ticket purchase) will be from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. With 150 chapters nationwide, NAACP ACT-SO, one of America’s best-kept secrets, is the largest program dedicated to academic achievement of Black youth in the country.**

The 2005 NAACP ACT-SO season is the first since last year’s passing of Vernon Jarrett, who created the national program in 1977. Mr. Jarrett was best known as a legendary award-winning journalist, civil rights activist, and co-founder of the National Association of Black Journalists Inc. NYC ACT-SO will uphold and expand Mr. Jarrett’s legacy through its annual student enrichment and fundraising activities.

“We dedicate this year to my dear friend Vernon,” said NYC ACT-SO Executive Director Anton Tomlinson, who founded the NYC ACT-SO chapter in 1987 with Benjamin Duster IV, a direct descendant of justice crusader and journalist Ida B. Wells. “I want NYC ACT-SO to live up to Vernon’s vision. In his honor, this program will be the best and an even more inspiring, effective academic program for Black high school students in New York City.”

There is still time for interested New York City high school students to apply for the NYC ACT-SO *Olympics of the Mind*, in which participants compete in 25 categories: Humanities – music composition, original essay, playwriting, poetry, and business/entrepreneurship; Performing Arts – dance, dramatics, music instrumental/classical, music instrument/contemporary, music vocal/classical, music vocal/contemporary, and

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oratory; Sciences – architecture, biology, chemistry, computer science, mathematics, physics/electronics, physics/energy and physics/general; and Visual Arts – drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, and filmmaking/video. In honor of Vernon Jarrett, NYC ACT-SO plans to add a journalism category to the Humanities offerings in 2006. The top three winners in each category receive a gold medal with \$500 in cash, silver medal with \$300, and bronze medal with \$200. The gold medallists will advance (among 1,200 gold medallists from local competitions across the country) to the national NAACP ACT-SO *Olympics of the Mind* to be held July 7-11 in Milwaukee, where prizes are a gold medal with \$2,000; silver with \$1,500; and bronze with \$1,000. Every national medallist also receives a fully-loaded laptop computer!

More than 98 percent of NYC-ACT-SO students graduate from high school and 85 percent go on to college. Participants' road to success and the *Olympics of the Mind* competition begins at the start of the school year with intensive enrichment workshops beginning in November. A kick-off rally is held in January, and the enrichment workshops, conducted on Saturdays at Manhattan's P.S. 84, 32 W. 92nd Street (between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West), continue through April. The workshops are led by coaches who are accomplished professionals in the competition categories and help students choose and develop individual projects. NYC ACT-SO is a volunteer-driven and led organization. All coaches, mentors, judges, and others, therefore, donate their time to work with students. The chapter is seeking more judges for this season's *Olympics of the Mind*. Since its inception, NYC ACT-SO has mentored more than 4,500 students through coaching sessions, the *Olympics of the Mind*, and other enrichment activities, which include field trips to Broadway plays, museums, and cultural centers; college admissions workshops; studies broad; and internships.

“The workshops help the students present their best at the *Olympics of the Mind*,” said Barbara Richards, chairperson of the NYC ACT-SO Workshop Committee for the past decade. “But the workshops are not just for preparing the students for competition. These sessions truly enhance their lives, fuel their dreams, and, in some cases, help discover hidden talents.”

Olympics of the Mind organizers agree the coaches are the backbone of the program.

“Without the coaches, there would be no NYC ACT-SO,” Ms. Richards said. “They are the ones who elicit excellence from the students. We've had alumni who have returned to serve as coaches and volunteers. This is the result of the interaction that *they* had years before with a caring individual. It's also a give and take – the kids learn from the coaches and the coaches learn from the students.”

Presented with pageantry and excitement, the *Olympics of the Mind* offers young participants a singular experience and level of recognition that can greatly impact their lives long after their high school years. Just ask some of today's highly-accomplished NYC ACT-SO alumni, who have gone on to become everything from doctors to museum curators to world-renowned musicians!

“ACT-SO helped me to excel, and that made all the difference in my career, and more importantly, my life,” said NYC ACT-SO alumnus and saxophonist sensation Mike Phillips, who won a silver medal in the music instrumental/contemporary category. Since graduation, he has toured with Stevie Wonder, given a

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command performance for Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, South Africa, and toured with Prince's 2004 Musicology Tour. Mr. Phillips is signed to Hidden Beach Recordings and will be releasing his sophomore album in May 2005. He also is the first non-athlete to secure an endorsement contract with Nike.

"Even if you don't win a medal in ACT-SO, you get to determine how far you go afterwards," Mr. Phillips said to a captivated audience of young hopefuls at the NYC ACT-SO Kick-Off Rally held in January. "I got to this level through hard work. Identify your calling or your gift, but know that it's not free. You have to cultivate it. You control your destiny. So don't just play 'not to lose.' Play to win."

History is moving forward at NYC ACT-SO, just as Vernon Jarrett first intended. New York City, America, and the world are taking notice!

"We have great respect for your organization and great respect for you," said New York City Council Member Gale Brewer, who encouraged students at the Kick-Off Rally to shine. "I support you wholeheartedly."

For more information about NYC ACT-SO, the *Olympics of the Mind*, Awards Ceremony tickets, or becoming a student competitor or a volunteer judge, the general public can call NYC ACT-SO at 212-666-9348, or 212-666-7212.

The NAACP NYC ACT-SO program, a 501(c) (3) volunteer organization funded by public and private donations, is dedicated to promoting academic and cultural excellence among Black high school students. NYC ACT-SO would like to thank its corporate, foundation, government and individual supporters: Anheuser-Busch Companies; Gloria Benfield Scholarship Fund; Bloomberg; Gale Brewer, Council Member NYC District 6; Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.; Citigroup; The Coca Cola Company; Con Edison; CS First Boston Foundation Trust; Daimler Chrysler Foundation; C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President; Fund for the City of New York; Glickenhau Foundation; Greater New York Links; JPMorgan Chase; Independence Community Foundation; Merrill Lynch & Co. Foundation, Inc.; Morgan Stanley; NBC; Pfizer Inc.; Rudin Foundation; S.C. Fundamental, LLC; State Farm Insurance; Watson Rice LLP; The Williams Capital Group, LLP; Western Union First Data; Peter Collery; Connie Kaiserman; Duncan MacMillan; Tom Miglis; Tom Secunda; Anton Tomlinson; and Lori-Ann Wynter. To learn more about NYC ACT-SO, visit us on the web at www.actso.org.

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