



Press Release

For Immediate Release
Contact: Ronald Blackburn Moreno
Tel. (202) 835-3600

Wal-Mart Foundation
Contact: Deisha Galberth
Tel. (800) 331-0085

Wal-Mart Foundation Awards ASPIRA \$1.65 million to Address the Latino Drop-Out Rate

Chicago, April 13, 2009 – The ASPIRA Association announced today a \$1.65 million grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation to significantly expand its ASPIRA Clubs, a Latino youth leadership drop-out prevention model that allows the organization to stem the exceedingly high drop out rate among Latino youth nationwide. The announcement was made at the ASPIRA of Illinois’ 40th Anniversary Gala in Chicago, which was sponsored by Wal-Mart and attended by over 700 guests, including a host of Illinois and Chicago elected officials and community leaders.

“This grant will allow ASPIRA to expand our signature program, the ASPIRA Clubs, to thousands of Latino youth -- not only in ASPIRA’s seven states and Puerto Rico, but across the nation, reaching thousands of students to ensure they complete high school and go on to college,” said Ronald Blackburn Moreno, president and CEO of ASPIRA. “We are very proud of our partnership with the Wal-Mart Foundation and grateful for this generous grant. It once more demonstrates Wal-Mart’s strong commitment to the Latino community and to the education of our youth. We will now be able to work with organizations across the country to bring this model to schools and communities that are struggling to increase the graduation rates of Latino students.

“For almost 50 years, the ASPIRA Leadership Clubs in schools have been an effective model to ensure Latino students graduate from school and go on to college,” said Margaret McKenna, president of the Wal-Mart Foundation. “We’re proud to provide funding from the Wal-Mart Foundation to assure the continued success of ASPIRA Clubs and – more importantly – the continued success of Latino youth,”

One of the most pressing issues in education is the exceedingly high drop out rate among Latinos. More than 40 percent of Latinos, which constitute over 20 percent of public school enrollment, do not complete high school. In many low-income areas, where the concentration of Latinos is higher, the drop-out rate can reach 80 percent. This drop out rate accounts for high levels of poverty, very low college participation rates and a high incidence of negative social behavior in Latino communities. Considering that Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority in the country, this is a true challenge for the future economic and social well-being of our nation.

ASPIRA's youth-directed clubs focus on academic achievement, youth leadership development, youth empowerment, community service and cultural pride. More than 95 percent of *Aspirantes* complete high school and over 90 percent attend college the same year they graduate. Currently, there are over 25,000 youth in ASPIRA Clubs across the country.

"The challenge we have had over the years is our capacity to truly expand the program nationally, to bring it to schools and communities with high concentrations of low-income Latino students so that we can have a major national impact on this problem," indicated Blackburn-Moreno.

With support from the Wal-Mart Foundation, ASPIRA will:

- expand the ASPIRA Clubs program in the states it operates in (Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico);
- expand the program to other states through partnerships with local Latino non-profit organizations; and
- work with major national education organizations to extend the program to schools and school districts across the country.

About the ASPIRA Association

The ASPIRA Association is the largest national Latino organization in the country and the only one dedicated exclusively to the education of Latin youth. Founded in 1961, ASPIRA's core program has been the ASPIRA Leadership Clubs in schools. In addition, ASPIRA provides a host of after-school programs including tutoring, mentoring, math and science enrichment programs, financial literacy, parental engagement and access and training in technology. Over the past ten years, ASPIRA has operated charter schools across the country and now has over 7,500 students in nine elementary, middle and high school charter schools. Over the past four decades, ASPIRA has been recognized as a leader in the education of Latino youth. Almost every Latino leader in government, business and the community in the states served by ASPIRA have been *Aspirantes* or have been affiliated with ASPIRA. At the national level, ASPIRA is a major voice and advocate for the education of Latino youth.

About Philanthropy at Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (NYSE: WMT) and the Wal-Mart Foundation are proud to support the charitable causes that are important to customers and associates in their own neighborhoods. Through its philanthropic programs and partnerships, the Wal-Mart Foundation funds initiatives focused on creating opportunities in education, workforce development, economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and health and wellness. From February 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009, Wal-Mart – and its domestic and international Foundations – gave more than \$423 million in cash and in-kind gifts globally. To learn more, visit www.walmartfoundation.org.