



Ashoka Announces Winner of Youth Venture “That Was Easy” Competition and Staples Renewal of Global Funding

\$500,000 Grant to Continue Expansion of Ashoka’s *Youth Venture* in 2007

ARLINGTON, Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--In a joint effort to recognize young people making an impact on society, Ashoka, a global organization with a 26-year history and network of more than 1,800 social entrepreneurs serving 70 countries, and Staples Foundation for Learning, a private foundation created by Staples, Inc. (NASDAQ: SPLS), today announced Kyle Freas, creator of Youth Together, as the grand prize winner of the Youth Venture “That Was Easy” Competition.

Youth Together is a venture that encourages young people in community service to help abused, homeless, and critically ill children. Since its inception, Youth Together has involved more than 50,000 students in 70 schools throughout Texas and New Mexico in community service and raised over \$70,000 for the partner organizations.

The Youth Venture “That Was Easy” Competition engaged leading Youth Venturers across the country, highlighting how they are making life “easier” for others. The online competition received entries from outstanding Youth Venture Teams all across the country and the grand prize winner, who will receive a \$5,000 Staples shopping spree, was one of five finalists selected for their outstanding impact, innovation and potential.

Staples Foundation for Learning began its support of Youth Venture in 2006 with a \$500,000 grant to launch their program in five countries where Staples operates: Brazil, Argentina, Germany, France and Spain. Staples Foundation for Learning announced today that it will donate a second \$500,000 grant to support the continued expansion of Youth Venture into these five countries, as well as entrance into two new countries, Belgium and Canada. Youth Venture is an Ashoka-originated initiative that is catalyzing and investing in a movement of young changemakers all over the world to help improve the quality of life in their communities.

The global collaboration gives Staples associates around the world the opportunity to connect with Youth Venturers, get involved in the venture projects, and establish their own Staples-Youth Venture social enterprises. Last year, ten Staples associates formed teams and launched their own ventures through Youth Venture in Argentina and Brazil. Their ventures addressed issues ranging from linking the elderly with young orphans through theater, to helping poor artisans export their products.

“The Staples family remains committed to investing in youth development and social entrepreneurship. Our partnership with Ashoka enables us to recognize the entrepreneurial spirit of young adults all over the world,” said Ron Sargent, president of Staples Foundation for Learning and chairman and CEO of Staples, Inc. “Over the past year, we’ve witnessed firsthand the impact Youth Venture has on young people and how it successfully encourages them to take initiative and contribute to social change. We look forward to continuing our support of Youth Venture’s global expansion.”

“This exciting and growing partnership highlights the power of entrepreneurship,” said Bill Drayton, Founder and CEO of Ashoka. “Together, Staples Foundation for Learning and Youth

Venture are showing how powerful organizations and societies are built and run by changemakers. Staples and its peers were founded on innovative ideas by entrepreneurs, and they grow and prosper because they find the talented people who take initiative and create positive change – changemakers. Youth Venture, with the support of Staples Foundation for Learning, aims to inspire all young people around the world to become changemakers and thus dramatically increase our ability as a global society to solve problems and thrive.”

About Ashoka

Ashoka is the world’s community of leading social entrepreneurs—individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit www.ashoka.org.

About Youth Venture

Youth Venture is a global movement of young changemakers. Youth Venture inspires and invests in teams of young people to start their own sustainable social ventures and connects them into a powerful global network. Collectively, these young changemakers are redefining the youth years as a time of initiative and positive change. For more information, please visit www.youthventure.org.

About Staples Foundation for Learning

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning, Inc. is to teach, train and inspire. Founded in 2002, the foundation has contributed nearly \$10 million to national and local charities that provide educational opportunities and job skills for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth. Staples Foundation for Learning has also developed lasting relationships with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Earth Force, Hispanic Heritage Foundation and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In addition, Staples Foundation for Learning supports Ashoka, an organization that develops and supports social entrepreneurs around the world, in eight countries: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the United States. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, please visit www.staplesfoundation.org.

Contacts

Ashoka Global Marketing
Beverly Schwartz, 703-527-8300 ext 227
bschwartz@ashoka.org

or

for Staples Community Relations
Eva Pereira, 781-559-0424
eva.pereira@rfbinder.com