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## **For immediate release:**

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### **AT&T awards \$50,000 grant to Plano ISD Education Foundation**

*Gift helps Plano ISD expand dropout prevention program to Middle Schools for the first time*

**DALLAS, August 14, 2009** — The Plano ISD Education Foundation today announced a \$50,000 grant from the AT&T Foundation, the corporate philanthropic arm of AT&T. The gift will allow Plano ISD to bring Destination: Graduation—a successful high school dropout prevention program run by the United Way—to Plano middle schools for the first time. By getting students involved in Destination: Graduation earlier in their education, school officials hope to help at-risk youth transition to high school ready for success and with a strong understanding of what graduation requires.

Plano ISD is the largest public school district in Collin County and in the 2006-2007 school year, 26 percent of Collin County students who entered the ninth grade did not graduate with their class, including 40 percent of African American students and 41 percent of Hispanic students. Over the last decade, Plano schools have also seen a dramatic increase in economically disadvantaged students, who are statistically more at-risk for dropping out.

“The Plano ISD Education Foundation is dedicated to raising private support for programs that have proven results in bridging the achievement gap in Plano ISD students,” said Beth Webb, president of the PISD Education Foundation. “The investment in Destination: Graduation will ensure our incoming high school students have the skills and tools they need to be successful. This program would not have been possible without AT&T and United Way’s generous support.”

Plano ISD initially offered Destination: Graduation to students and parents at Armstrong and Bowman Middle Schools, which feed into Williams High School. The program consists of two parts: a parental

engagement program during the school year, and a two-week summer camp for incoming ninth grade students that have been identified as at-risk for dropping out.

Last spring, selected parents of Armstrong and Bowman Middle School students who have been identified as at-risk were recruited for Parental Involvement classes conducted by the Dallas Concilio, a non-profit agency that serves the Hispanic community in the Dallas area. Topics of the classes included the importance of education for life success in today's global economy, negative influences and adolescence, how the educational system works, and the differences between middle and high school. The purpose is to help these parents learn how to best support their children over the next four years as they work towards their high school diploma.

Separately, during the summer between eighth and ninth grade, Destination: Graduation students have been attending a two-week program this month led by the Boys & Girls Club of Collin County. During this time, students will participate in skill-building exercises and career development programs, and will receive homework help and tutoring for their summer school classes.

Students will then enter the high school campus with a ready-made peer group that is positive about education and ready to support each other in their educational success. Students will then be tracked as they move through ninth grade to document their promotion to the tenth grade. If they choose, students may continue to participate in Destination: Graduation throughout high school as well.

Plano ISD high school students who have participated in Destination: Graduation in the past have shown very promising academic improvement after just one semester in the program:

- 88% passed all their classes in the fall semester.
- 80% increased their GPA by at least 5 points or maintained their GPA above 70.
- 80% increased knowledge of college prep by at least 25%.
- 70% increased involvement in extracurricular activities.

"It is through these partnerships that we can give our young people all the opportunities they need to succeed," said state Rep. Jerry Madden. "We need to help our youth prepare themselves to compete in the global economy and help the community stem the high school dropout rate."

"As a major corporation, we're concerned how the dropout issue affects our nation's ability to compete in the global economy," said Holly Reed, regional vice president of External Affairs for



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AT&T. “As a corporate citizen, we’re concerned that the U.S. is not realizing human potential. We commend legislators such as Rep. Madden who support public policies that work to strengthen education delivery in communities in Texas and beyond.”

For 25 years, the AT&T Foundation has been committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. In 2008, AT&T announced the largest education initiative in its history – AT&T Aspire – a \$100 million commitment focused on high school success and workforce readiness. AT&T Aspire supports the great work of educators whose passion and commitment helps students succeed each and every day. In addition, AT&T announced in 2008 that 172 schools and nonprofit organizations across the country will receive \$29 million in competitively awarded grants that are designed to support high school retention programs for at-risk students.

#### **About Plano ISD Education Foundation**

The Plano ISD Education Foundation – <http://www.pisd.edu/foundation> – is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization with the mission to generate private support for priority projects identified by Plano ISD not funded by tax dollars. The Foundation provides grants to educators, programs that support academic enrichment to Plano ISD students, emergency assistance for teachers and staff members in crisis, as well as programs aimed at recruiting and retaining quality teachers. To learn more about the Plano ISD Education Foundation or to make a donation, contact Executive Director Monica Shortino at 469-752-8091.

#### **About AT&T**

AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) is a premier communications holding company. Its subsidiaries and affiliates, AT&T operating companies, are the providers of AT&T services in the United States and around the world. Among their offerings are the world's most advanced IP-based business communications services, the nation's fastest 3G network and the best wireless coverage worldwide, and the nation's leading high speed Internet access and voice services. In domestic markets, AT&T is known for the directory publishing and advertising sales leadership of its Yellow Pages and YELLOWPAGES.COM organizations, and the AT&T brand is licensed to innovators in such fields as communications equipment. As part of their three-screen integration strategy, AT&T operating companies are expanding their TV entertainment offerings. In 2009, AT&T again ranked No. 1 in the telecommunications industry on *FORTUNE*<sup>®</sup> magazine's list of the World's Most Admired Companies. Additional information about AT&T Inc. and the products and services provided by AT&T subsidiaries and affiliates is available at <http://www.att.com>.

#### **About Philanthropy at AT&T**

For 25 years, AT&T and the AT&T Foundation have been committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its philanthropic initiatives and partnerships, AT&T supports projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; and address community needs. As the AT&T Foundation celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, more than \$160 million was contributed through corporate-, employee- and AT&T Foundation-giving programs in 2008 alone.

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