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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 9, 2006

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RENEWING DREAMS AT RAVENSWOOD 50 Youth From Queens Public Housing Development Receive \$2 Million College Education Promise

The Thomas & Jeanne Elmezzi Private Foundation, the “I Have a Dream” Foundation[®], and the New York City Housing Authority Pledge to Fund College Education and 10-Year After-School Program for Third and Fourth-grade ‘Dreamers’

The day single mother Monique Holloway holds 9-year-old daughter Nhyzhe’s college diploma in hand is the day she says she’s fulfilled her dream. In a neighborhood where the annual income averages \$14,000, and the high school graduation rate among the mostly black and Latino population hovers at 43%, Holloway credits the “I Have a Dream” Program with “keeping children off the street.”

“The Program teaches children to grab onto their talents and shows them there are things out there we can build and work toward getting,” says Holloway, a 10-year resident of the Ravenswood public housing development in Long Island City.

Thanks to the contributions of The Thomas & Jeanne Elmezzi Private Foundation, a philanthropic organization, and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), Nhyzhe and 50 third and fourth-graders at the Ravenswood Houses, will receive the promise of their dreams -- a college education, free after-school program and tutoring through the 12th grade, and lifetime friendship through the “I Have a Dream” Program. The tradeoff? Those who are adopted into the Program pledge to be Dreamers - committed students who promise to stay in school, aim for college, and keep their eye on their dreams.

Following through will be a team effort, as committed staff and volunteers at the new “I Have a Dream” – Ravenswood II Project will support the Dreamers until they graduate from high school. The Elmezzi Foundation hopes to adopt up to 70 Dreamers in the future. Students from the Ravenswood Program attend Long Island City schools, P.S. 111 and P.S. 76, as well as P.S. 112, where most of the after-school activities occur.

"I Have a Dream" Sponsors like the Elmezzi Foundation make a 10-15-year commitment when they adopt a grade of children from a school or same-age group from a public housing development. The Elmezzi Foundation will contribute approximately \$1.2 million plus funding for college tuition over the next 10 years. NYCHA, which has already supported six IHAD Projects in Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx, will contribute \$50,000 per year to the Program.

"Any investment in a child's future by people who really care is a great investment," said Tino Hernandez, NYCHA Chairman.

"We chose the 'I Have a Dream' Program because of the long term nature of the program. Working with the children consistently over 10-12 years has a deeper impact on their lives," says Elmezzi Foundation Program Officer Pooja Joshi. "There is relationship-building with the children and also, parents and families. Working with them after school every day, we get to know each child's strengths and weaknesses intimately and can help students navigate them."

"I Have a Dream" – Ravenswood II is the second group of Dreamers to be adopted from the Ravenswood Houses since Harold Friedman, the owner of National Elevator Cab & Door Corp. in Woodside, committed to supporting 80 Dreamers from P.S. 76 in 1994. Eighty percent of Friedman's Dreamers graduated or earned their GED. Seventy percent of the Dreamers are either currently enrolled in college or college-bound.

The need for a second Program is mirrored by the stagnant conditions of the neighborhood in which up to 96 percent of students still qualify for free school lunches. In addition to providing academic help, the new Ravenswood II Program will offer Dreamers drama and fitness programs as well as field trips to cultural organizations. Dreamers will give back to the community through neighborhood beautification projects and participate in community service workshops.

"I Have a Dream" – New York Metro Area Deputy Executive Director, Thierry Cazeau, formerly served as the original Ravenswood Project Coordinator and grew up in Ravenswood. He looks forward to watching the next generation of Dreamers succeed. "This is a wonderful opportunity for the community. I'm excited to see the program benefit the Dreamers in the amazing way it impacted mine," said Cazeau.

The "I Have a Dream"—Ravenswood II Program was launched November 9 at P.S. 112- The Dutch Kills School Cafeteria and Auditorium: 25-05 37th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11106. The launch was attended by members of the Elmezzi Foundation Board of Directors and other distinguished guests. Keynote speaker Dreamer Saul Arvel, who benefited from the first "I Have a Dream"[®] Ravenswood Program, addressed Dreamers. NYCHA Vice Chairman Earl Andrews, Jr., offered opening remarks. Kara Forte, National Foundation Interim President & CEO, who is also the New York Metro "I Have a Dream" Executive Director addressed the Dreamers and their families. Eugene Lang, the founder of "I Have a Dream," lead the Dreamers in their "Dreamer Pledge."

The Thomas and Jeanne Elmezzi Private Foundation was established in 1996 with the goal to support underserved communities and people in the tri-state area through program areas such as youth development, education, medical research, services for the elderly, and disaster relief.

About the "I Have a Dream" Foundation[®]

The "I Have a Dream" Foundation[®] motivates and empowers children from low-income communities to achieve their education and career goals through a long-term program of mentoring, tutoring, academic and cultural enrichment, and tuition assistance for higher education. Local IHAD programs adopt an entire class of students from elementary schools, or a same-age group of children from a housing project, and work with these children and their families through high school. This long-term, sustained commitment is the critical element to the success of projects. The "I Have a Dream" model was created in 1981 by New York City businessman Eugene Lang, who sponsored the first I Have a Dream project. In 1986, the national "I Have a

Dream" Foundation® was established. Since then, 194 projects have helped 15,000 "Dreamers." Currently, 66 projects operate in 16 states and Washington, D.C., and one in New Zealand, with additional programs being developed. For more information, visit www.ihad.org.

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