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Broward County High School Students Play Starring Role in Teen Trendsetters™ Reading Mentors Kick-Off

~Volunteer USA, Comcast & State Farm promote reading, community service among students~

Hollywood - More than 200 Broward County high school students were in the spotlight today at a district-wide kickoff of the Teen Trendsetters™ Reading Mentors program, a youth-driven initiative aimed at improving the reading skills of elementary students and providing leadership and community service experience to teens.

Teen Trendsetters™ is a program of Volunteer USA Foundation. It was first launched in Florida, in 2002, by then-Governor Jeb Bush as part of his call to place more mentors in Florida schools. It has since gained national attention, as a winner of the prestigious Harris Wofford Award for best youth program.

"Thanks to the tremendous generosity over the years from the Legislature and our business partners like **Comcast** and the **State Farm Youth Advisory Board**, we have watched Teen Trendsetters grow in Florida from just 30 teens to an estimated 2500 this year, said Bush. "Because of its great success in nurturing young readers and leaders, today this hugely popular program can be found in schools throughout the southeast, with ten other states following Florida's lead by starting Teen Trendsetters programs of their own."

The high school students were joined at today's kickoff by dozens of teachers, school district representatives, program sponsors and elected leaders including Representative Evan Jenne and Senator Eleanor Sobel. The Florida Legislature and corporate sponsors provide funding to cover the cost of the training, curriculum and books to offer Teen Trendsetters™ **free-of-charge to schools and students.**

"Comcast is a proud sponsor of Teen Trendsetters™, a program that touches and benefits so many young people," said Comcast's Regional Vice President of Government Affairs & Community Investment, Klay Fennell. "As a committed supporter of literacy and reading programs, Comcast works with partners like Volunteer USA to enrich lives and make a positive difference in our schools, homes and communities."

"The State Farm Youth Advisory Board is a great avenue of students across America to support incredible educational opportunities in our schools. The Teen Trendsetters Program is one of the preeminent mentoring programs in the country and we're proud to work with Volunteer USA and sponsor the incredible effort of these students," said John Pisula, State Farm Public Affairs Specialist.

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At today's "movie-themed" event, the teens were trained on a research-based program called BrainStorm™. The curriculum includes focused topic areas, each with a 10-session, skill-based student magazine, a comprehensive tutor guide and books. During the school year, the teens will spend one hour a week with their mentees, reading books and enjoying other educational activities together. In addition, the younger mentees will be given 15-20 books during the course of the year, to share reading time with their parents and build their own home library.

"We're thrilled so many teens are motivated to help their younger peers become better readers and more confident in school," said Liza McFadden, president of Volunteer USA Foundation which manages the program. "This past year, Teen Trendsetters in Broward schools invested more than seven-thousand hours of mentoring time. This incredible labor of love benefits not only the youngest students; it's also providing Florida teens a valuable opportunity to earn the community service hours needed on many college and scholarship applications. In fact, 82% of senior Teen Trendsetters report they are eligible to receive a Bright Futures state scholarship."

As the stars of the show, the teens' training session included:

- Researching the Role – A focus on the role of a mentor, Teen Trendsetters™ Standards of Excellence, expectations for mentors, and how to build the mentor/mentee relationship
- Setting the Scene – A focus on creating a safe learning environment, and safety policies and procedures
- Visionary Direction –A focus on three "spotlights" or important characteristics of great leaders
- Dealing with Actors on Set – A focus on child development; teens learn the different types of mentees they may encounter and how to work with various personalities
- Rehearsals, Re-takes and Editing/Capturing a Memorable Scene – A focus on the effective use of BrainStorm through a role play session, and learning reading comprehension and fluency building strategies

This year, more than 600 Broward County students will be volunteering as Trendsetter mentors. Participating high schools include: Atlantic Technical, Blanche Ely, Boyd Anderson, Coconut Creek, Cooper City, Coral Glades, Deerfield Beach, Everglades, Charles W. Flanagan, Ft. Lauderdale, Hallandale, Hollywood Hills, McFatter Technical, Monarch, Northeast, Nova, Pompano Beach, South Plantation, Stranahan, JP Taravella, West Broward and Western.

In total, more than 6,000 students from 11 southern states will be Teen Trendsetters™ reading partners this year. For more information, visit www.teentrendsetters.org.

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