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**Communities In Schools and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership  
Awarded \$400,000 to Increase High School Graduation Rates and Home  
Ownership in Charlotte**

*Bank of America Charitable Foundation's Neighborhood Excellence Initiative® invests  
\$20 million to strengthen communities across the country*

**CHARLOTTE** – The Bank of America Charitable Foundation today announced its continuing support of nonprofits in the Charlotte community, providing more than \$400,000 in unrestricted funding to address critical social issues through the bank's *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* (NEI). The program, which is helping to sustain nonprofits during this challenging economic time and increase their long-term viability, is investing \$20 million globally this year in addition to the more than \$90 million committed over the last five years.

Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership have been named 2009 Charlotte Neighborhood Builders® through which they will each receive \$200,000 in unrestricted grant funding and participate in Bank of America's Neighborhood Excellence Leadership Program® with other nonprofit leaders from 45 communities across the country and London.

Communities In Schools is helping to keep at-risk children in school throughout their academic careers by providing a safety net of services that includes individual case management, school performance monitoring and after-school programming, health exams and career counseling. Approximately 2,500 students drop out of Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools each year, which carries a high price tag (Columbia University estimates the total lifetime social costs of one high school dropout is \$209,000). Among other benefits provided by Communities In Schools, 99 percent of its participating students have stayed in school and 90 percent of high school seniors have graduated.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership is also strengthening the community by providing affordable, quality housing for low- and moderate-income families in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and helping community members become more financially stable and independent. The partnership has helped to create some 1,300 homebuyers and nearly 2,000 affordable rental units and it has counseled 12,300 families.

“Bank of America is supporting the Charlotte community through the *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* and other lending, investing and community development programs that address critical social issues and align with our corporate social responsibility efforts,” said Charles Bowman, North Carolina and Charlotte Market President, Bank of America. “In our current economy, communities need our support more than ever, and this program is designed to give that support through the effective combination of partnership, leadership development and flexible funding.”

NEI honors two other categories of community leaders: **Local Heroes**, who contribute significantly to the health of their neighborhood, will direct a \$5,000 donation from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation to an eligible nonprofit of their choice, and **Student Leaders®**, who are exemplary high school juniors and seniors with a passion for improving their communities.

**2009 Charlotte Local Heroes are:**

- **Loretta Caldwell**, funds will be donated to Blessings in the Sky
- **Jane Hixon**, funds will be donated to Crisis Assistance Ministry
- **Donna Lacey**, funds will be donated to Project Healthshare/Volunteers in Medicine Clinic
- **Joseph McGrew**, funds will be donated to Kinetic Christian Church
- **Sandra Smith**, funds will be donated to Urban Ministry

Earlier this year, 230 Student Leaders from across the country, including five from Charlotte, participated in paid, eight-week summer internships with local nonprofit organizations and in a weeklong Bank of America student leadership summit in Washington, D.C. to learn about national service/civic engagement, financial education and how nonprofits, businesses and government partner to create positive change.

**2009 Charlotte Student Leaders are:**

- **Kevin Beach**, of Davidson, is a graduate of North Mecklenberg High School and interned at Seigle Avenue Partners
- **Kunal Desai**, of Charlotte, is a senior at Ardrey Kell High School and interned at A Child’s Place
- **Jenay Powell**, of Marvin, is a graduate of Charlotte Latin School and interned at A Child’s Place
- **Madison Sampson**, of Charlotte, is a graduate of Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology and interned at A Child’s Place
- **Sarah Woolsey**, of Charlotte, is a graduate of Providence Senior High School and interned at Seigle Avenue Partners

All 2009 Charlotte NEI winners will be honored at a special awards event this fall.

**WHEN:** Wed., Oct. 14, 2009

**WHERE:** Roof With a View, 800 W. Hill St.

**TIME:** Remarks begin at 6:00 p.m.  
Interviews available beginning at 5:30 p.m.

*Editor's note: Event is open to news media, and interviews can be scheduled in advance.*

### **About the Neighborhood Excellence Initiative**

The Bank of America Charitable Foundation's *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* annually recognizes organizations, individuals and students who have shown a commitment to improving their communities. In its sixth year, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation has committed more than \$110 million globally to the NEI program since its inception.

By the end of 2009, more than 800 leaders from the nonprofit awardees will have participated in the Neighborhood Excellence Leadership Program®, which builds a network of community leaders across the country to share learning and insight in areas including strategic communications, financial management, succession planning, and long-term development. Through NEI, Bank of America has also encouraged community leadership at the grassroots level by recognizing more than 1,200 high school students and 1,200 community leaders over the last six years.

### **Bank of America Corporate Philanthropy**

Building on a long-standing tradition of investing in the communities it serves, Bank of America this year embarked on a new, ten-year goal to donate \$2 billion to nonprofit organizations engaged in improving the health and vitality of their neighborhoods. Funded by Bank of America, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation gave more than \$200 million in 2008, making the bank the most generous financial institution in the world and the second largest donor of all U.S. corporations in cash contributions. Bank of America approaches investing through a national strategy called "neighborhood excellence" under which it works with local leaders to identify and meet the most pressing needs of individual communities. Bank associate volunteers contributed more than 900,000 hours in 2008 to enhance the quality of life in their communities nationwide. For more information about Bank of America Corporate Philanthropy, please visit [www.bankofamerica.com/foundation](http://www.bankofamerica.com/foundation).

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