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—*For Immediate Release*

Students, Seniors Celebrate 21 Years of Intergenerational Work Study Program

*Student of the Year and Michael J. Scarfia Awardees announced;
Six Veterans Recognized with Senior Mentorship Award*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK – May 23, 2008 – New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW today celebrated the 21st anniversary of the Intergenerational Work Study Program (IWSP). The program, provided in partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) and the aging network community partners, brings New York City youth together with seniors to build bridges between the generations. High school students who participate as part of their studies provide needed services to seniors in senior centers, nursing homes and other home care settings, while seniors reciprocate with friendship, mentoring and role modeling. This year, 300 students from 19 high schools took part in the IWSP program. Over 21 years, 60 high schools, more than 250 aging service work sites, a total of 5,500 students and over 100,000 older New Yorkers have contributed and benefited from the intergenerational program.

“Twenty-one years ago former DFTA Commissioner Janet Sainer realized a vision by creating a program that cuts across generational and cultural lines to build relationships between the City’s youth and seniors that benefit not only individuals but entire communities,” Commissioner Méndez-Santiago said. “Today’s anniversary is dedicated to Sainer- with today more than 300 high school students contributing to their communities making New York City a better place not only for our seniors but for all New Yorkers. I want to thank the Department of Education and our various community partners for their continued support for the program, and all the school personnel who make it possible.”

Three student awards, one senior award and two administrative awards were presented during the ceremony. All of the student awardees will be graduating in June. The top student honor, the Michael A. Scarfia, Jr. Award, comes with an \$8,000 college scholarship. The awardees are:

Momadououry Diallo (DeWitt Clinton High School)
Michael A. Scarfia, Jr. Award

Deidra Harris (Newtown High School)
Student of the Year & recipient of the Ft. Green Senior Citizens Council

Virginia Barretto (DeWitt Clinton High School)
The Margaret Rivers Scholarship

Norma Smith (DeWitt Clinton High School)
Teacher of the Year

Karen White (The Cobble Hill Health Center)
Worksite Supervisor of the Year

This year the Department extended a special recognition to the veterans of World War II, Korean War and the Vietnam War as Senior Mentors of the Year. The *Janet S. Sainer Intergenerational Mentorship Award* was given to a group of six U.S. veterans who served in World War II (1-Army), the Korean War (3-Army) and the Vietnam War (2-Air Force and Army). They reside at the New York State Veterans Home at St. Albans in Queens. Through their daily contact with students, these veterans served as a rich source of living history and mentors and role models, connecting students to the elder generation and demonstrating the value and necessity of intergenerational exchange.

“Thanks to the Commissioner and the Department of Education’s commitment to intergenerational programming, the Intergenerational Work Study Program continues to benefit hundreds of students and thousands of seniors each year through promoting multi-generational exchange,” said Intergenerational Programs Director Mary Ann Zimmermann-McKinney. “The participating public high school students, school administrators and faculty, community site supervisors and elder New Yorkers are truly the ones who make this program a national intergenerational model.”

The Intergenerational Work Study Program was initially designed as a high school drop-out prevention program. The IWSP soon expanded its student base to include academically-achieving, college-bound and developmentally challenged students. The program also broadened its mission of ensuring that students graduate from high school. Its mission now includes steering students to college enrollment, post-graduation employment with providers in the aging services network and to careers in health and social services.

Today’s 21st anniversary event is dedicated to Janet S. Sainer, former Commissioner of the Department for the Aging. Sainer passed away last June; she was 88 years old. An internationally recognized leader in the field of aging, the IWSP was founded in February 1987 by Sainer with the support of Mayor Koch and private funding. The program started with four high schools—Pacific, Satellite Academy, Seward Park, and West Side—49 students, and nine senior centers. Since its founding, the program has involved approximately 5,000 students.