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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Girls Action Network, Inc. salutes its first Scholarship recipient – Irvington, New Jersey Native Samirah Legagneur**

Girls Action Network, Inc. (“GAN”) hosted a fundraiser, The Spring Tea, to mark the successful completion of its 1<sup>st</sup> year of programming and to raise awareness about the organization at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club in South Orange, New Jersey on April 25, 2004. The theme of the tea centered on the organization’s trademark slogan, *Shattering Stereotypes & Unlocking Opportunities*<sup>SM</sup>. During the event, Girls Action Network<sup>SM</sup> also saluted its first scholarship recipient of the GAN - Smith Summer and Science Engineering Program, Samirah Legagneur, of Irvington, New Jersey.

Samirah Legagneur is an exemplary student at Irvington High School where she is finishing her junior year. She has maintained a strong academic standing while remaining well rounded by actively participating in school clubs such as the Health Care Academy, The Key Club, The Student Council and the Urban Youth Coalition. Encouraged by her teachers, Legagneur applied for the scholarship and was chosen amid a very competitive applicant pool by GAN and Smith College located in Northampton, Massachusetts to attend a comprehensive summer science program geared towards expanding the scientific interest in bright, promising young women. As determined as this young woman is, she is grounded and well spoken, stating that even with all of her accomplishments, she acknowledges the constant love and support of her parents and family.

An unexpected honor was further bestowed upon Legagneur when New Jersey State Senator Nia H. Gill, Esq., one of the event’s featured speakers presented her with an official legislative resolution further highlighting her accomplishments. Ms. Verdia Johnson, President & Co-Founder, Footsteps, LLC presented Legagneur with her GAN-Smith Summer Science & Engineering Program Scholarship. In addition, Legagneur also received a donated gift certificate from the GAP to help her prepare for her one month summer program.

Also speaking at The Spring Tea were Ms. Heide Gardner, Director of Diversity, Interpublic Group, and GAN Girl, Alicia Nicolas. Additionally, the program featured salutes to GAN from Ms. Alma Powell and Dr. Mae Jemison and a Proclamation from the Village of South Orange.

“GAN serves an important role because it is employing educational, corporate, civic, and community resources to create a strong group of young leaders that reflects the diversity of aptitudes, cultural experiences, and the gender of our society. We are so delighted to bring together such influential women from myriad vocational fields to network, to champion this cause and to raise funds to support GAN and our female leaders of tomorrow,” commented Elisa M Westfield, GAN founder.

GAN Overview: Girls Action Network, Inc. (“GAN”) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that educates and empowers girls in grades 7-12 with special emphasis on those from underserved communities In a progressive manner, GAN encourages girls to shatter the

stereotypes that limit their career options and enables them to fully explore their educational and career opportunities and guide their own direction toward vocational and personal success. GAN's long-term vision is to be an advocate for an untapped and diverse pool of human capital and leaders for corporations, civic organizations and the community.

GAN seeks to accomplish these goals through:

- The use of technology, and the administration of career assessments that allow the girls to identify, based on their personalities, skills and abilities, possible vocational directions they may not have considered-- revolutionary concept for such young women.
- The execution of career awareness forums featuring successful women in a variety of traditional and non-traditional careers.
- The promotion of networking with our "CEOs" or our Champions for Empowerment and Opportunity<sup>SM</sup> who act as positive role models for the girls, introducing them to the realities of the career paths they wish to explore.
- The collaboration with partner/affiliate organizations and programs in which GAN girls can participate to broaden their cultural, educational and vocational awareness capacities.

GAN was founded by Elisa M. Westfield, Esq., a corporate attorney at the international law firm, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, who was the first African-American woman from the state of Wisconsin to graduate from the United States Military Academy, West Point. Through her professional experiences and community activism, Westfield saw a need to focus on career exploration for today's youth. After mentoring girls in middle and high schools for over fifteen years, she was troubled by a disturbing trend affecting young women. Westfield consistently observed that young girls lack access to information about traditional and non-traditional career opportunities and income earning potential. Armed with the knowledge gained from working on strategic hiring processes for multinational corporations, which continue to experience issues regarding their human capital and her desire to help create a pool of diverse leaders for civic organizations, communities and educational institutions, Westfield decided that a collaborative effort needed to be launched to create a strong group of young leaders who reflect the diversity of aptitudes, cultural perspectives and the gender of our society to create a positive outcome for all. Furthermore, after conducting research on career assessment programs focused on girls, Westfield found a tremendous void of service and quality programs and decided to establish Girls Action Network, Inc. ("GAN").

To receive more information on the organization or its founder, please contact Dalila Casimir at (973) 535-5917. For additional information about GAN, please visit [www.girlsactionnetwork.org](http://www.girlsactionnetwork.org).