

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GIRLS ACTION NETWORK SALUTES TWIN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**

**Wendy Lewis, Vice President, Office of the Commissioner of Major League Baseball, Receives *The Champion for Empowerment & Opportunity* SM Trailblazer Award.**

New York, NY – **Girls Action Network, Inc.** (“GAN”) hosted its annual Spring Tea fundraiser on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club, in South Orange, New Jersey. The theme of the tea was centered on the organization’s trademark slogan, ***Shattering Stereotypes & Unlocking Opportunities***, with this year’s focus on ***Excelling as Entrepreneurs***. **GAN** is a young, ground-breaking organization that has demonstrated a unique methodology that educates and empowers young women in grades 7-12, with special emphasis on those from underserved communities. Now providing programming and services in New Jersey, the girls hail from New Jersey schools, as well as schools in New York.

At the core of **GAN’s** mission, the realization is that girls commonly are directed towards traditional careers, away from, for example, technology and the sciences. Reaching beyond single mentoring, **GAN** continues to create a myriad of innovative programs and experiences, some in partnership with other not-for-profits and organizations, designed to show girls their expansive career and educational choices. At a time when, "research consistently shows that education for girls is one of the most effective – if not the most effective investment a nation can make to improve the health and prosperity of present and future generations " , Westfield, the Founder and President commented in her opening remarks, **GAN** illustrates how a relatively small organization can make a difference.

In 2004, the **GAN – Smith College** partnership was established which provides a fully-paid scholarship for a qualified **GAN** participant(s) to attend Smith College’s one month Science and Engineering Summer program held on the Smith campus in Northampton, Massachusetts.

In a remarkable situation, **Girls Action Network** recognized two scholarship recipients: Dalibell and Nedalibell Ferreira, twin sisters out of a set of triplets, finishing their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year at the Young Women’s Leadership School in New York. Raised in a bilingual household, English and Spanish, the young women’s parents hail from the Dominican Republic. Both twins have maintained a strong academic standing while remaining well rounded by actively participating in school activities such as Student Council, basketball, and community service for the teachers. They also participate in drama and dance. Encouraged by their teachers, the Ferreira twins applied for the program and were chosen amid a very competitive applicant pool by **GAN** and **Smith College**. As determined as these young women are, they are grounded, acknowledging the constant love and support of their mother and family. The third member of the triplets, Damali, plans to participate in a different summer program, focusing on medical and scientific research.

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Another highlight of the event was the presentation of The Champion for Empowerment & Opportunity<sup>SM</sup> Trailblazer Award, which is presented annually to a male or female of outstanding character, career achievement and leadership for their efforts to make a positive contribution to the improvement of quality of life for women and girls and who has continually displayed a firm commitment to the ideals of Girls Action Network. The 2005 award went to **Wendy Lewis**, Vice President, Office of the Commissioner of Major League Baseball. Ms. Lewis is responsible for directing the recruitment process and workforce needs for MLB's Central Office; overseeing MLB's Diverse Business Partners Program; and, extensive work with all member clubs to ensure that greater number of businesses have an opportunity to participate in the procurement of desired goods and services.

The Keynote Speaker was **Lisa Price**, Founder & President of *Carol's Daughter*, with **Patricia Clayton**, Proprietor of *The Harlem Tea Room*, presenting the Ritual of Tea. Other special guests included **Cameron Myler, Esq.** and four-time Olympic Luge Competitor, whose speech also linked to **GAN's** commitment to health and fitness. Senator Jon Corzine and Stacie J of the Apprentice saluted GAN in support of its vision and to encourage the girls in attendance in their efforts for future success.

The event also showcased local vendors who participated in the Vendor Village with a Silent Auction component that ran from 3 pm to 5:30 pm. To date, GAN has been truly fortunate in its ability to deliver programs and services as a result of dedicated volunteer services of many generous people, organizations and corporations. Specifically, the Tea Committee was comprised of the following individuals: Callie Crowder – Souvenir Journal Ads Chair; Andrea Fant-Hobbs – Vendor Village & Silent Auction Chair & Speaker Co-Chair; Ileana Griffiths – Venue Chair and Meetings Host; Mary Ann Jackson – Financial Chair; Charmaine Jones – Promotional Items & Certificates Chair; Christella Ritchwood – Invitation & Souvenir Journal Chair; Dalila Springer - Scholarship and Student Organizations Chair; Felicia Walker – Speakers' Gifts Chair; Dr. Quincy Tharps – Advisor; Jamie Wright; Natasha Howard and Elisa Westfield, Esq. - Spring Tea Chair.

**Girls Action Network** was founded by **Elisa M. Westfield, Esq.**, the first African-American woman from the state of Wisconsin to graduate from the United States Military Academy, West Point. She has led an extraordinary life, fighting to shatter people's preconceived notions about individuals abilities and to create opportunities for others – in her case, whether it be during her 13 years of classical ballet training; eight years of military service in the U.S. Army; or as a corporate attorney in the New York office of Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, an international law firm.

Through her professional experiences and community activism, Westfield saw a need to focus on education and career exploration for today's youth. After mentoring girls in middle and high schools for over 15 years, she consistently observed that young women lacked access to information about the broad spectrum of career opportunities and income earning potential. She decided that a collaborative effort needed to be launched to help create a strong group of future leaders, reflecting the diversity of aptitudes and cultural perspectives. Furthermore, after conducting research on career assessment programs focused on girls, Westfield found a tremendous void, and decided to establish **Girls Action Network**.

Please visit [www.girlsactionnetwork.org](http://www.girlsactionnetwork.org).

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