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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### GIRLS ACTION NETWORK® SPEAKERS BUREAU PARTNERS WITH STEPPINGSTONE SCHOLARS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES DAY

New York, NY – **Girls Action Network, Inc.** (“GAN”) kicked-off its Speakers Bureau operations through a partnership with Steppingstone Scholars, Inc. on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA. The theme of the Support Services Day event was centered on GAN’s trademark slogan, *Shattering Stereotypes & Unlocking Opportunities*®, with this event’s focus on *Transforming Tools for Today’s Success*. Over 400 families and students were invited to participate in the various panel discussions and workshops that were conducted from 10:00 am until 2:30 pm. GAN provided over fifty-percent of the event’s speakers to include: **Alycia Banks, Elisa Basnight, Lisa Charles, Ileana Griffiths, Yolanda Grimes, Mary Ann Jackson, and Lori Tharps.**

The event opened with welcoming remarks from Steppingstone President, **Nina Weisbord**, and Director **Eddie Mensah** and was then turned over to GAN. **Elisa Basnight**, GAN Founder and President, commented in her opening remarks and introduction of the keynote speaker that “Life in today’s 21<sup>st</sup> century is constantly providing challenges for families and children related to (1) achieving the American Dream and (2) finding our own personal success. I’m happy to share that GAN has dynamic, engaging and entertaining speakers you’ll meet this morning and afternoon who can provide all of us with guidance on transformation, empowerment, practical tools and strategies for resiliency.”

Keynote speaker, **Lori Tharps**, a journalist and author, opened her remarks with a powerful story from her newly released memoir, *Kinky Gazpacho* (Atria 2008). Tharps’ presentation, which focused on historical accomplishments of people of color and the importance of understanding one’s own cultural history as a means to achieve one’s individual potential, received a standing ovation from the attendees as she set the tone for empowerment and success for the rest of the event.

The afternoon activities were divided into various panel discussions and workshops targeted to the adults, parents and students. The highly applauded adult panel featured **Alycia Banks**, a Performance Consultant at UBS and a career counseling consultant, who’s presentation covered cultural adaptation and communication; **Mary Ann Jackson**, a Project Manager at Prudential Financial, who discussed financial fitness; and **Kama Pierce** from the Admissions Department at Episcopal Academy, who addressed one’s ability to navigate between different worlds. The adult panel was facilitated by Steppingstone Director of Admissions, **Caryn Rivers**.

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The students were divided among the boys and girls into two panels. The boys panel addressed the very important question: "*How it's different for us?*" and was facilitated by **Dirk Parker** and also had **David Turner** and **Will Welcher** participate as speakers. The young women's panel was a combination of a panel discussion, along with student participation in four interactive break-out groups. This well-received panel featured **Ileana Griffiths** of Horizon Blue Cross and principal of **Your Being**, who discussed health and fitness and commented that "There are a lot of misconceptions about body type. Our young girls are just as media sensitive as any other group of young girls." She further noted that "We need good/healthy role models... parents, teaches, extended family." **Yolanda Grimes** of Arent Fox discussed strategies to overcome adversity and lessons learned from her book, ***Looking for Love In All The Wrong Places***. **Lisa Charles, Esq.**, a professional actress and classical singer, explored finding your passion with the audience participants and advised the students they must "continue to nurture [their] inner core through good works and deeds." They must also "remember to live their life and not let life live them." **Elisa Basnight**, GAN Founder and corporate attorney, moderated the panel and led the workshop on shattering stereotypes. Basnight was the first African-American woman from the state of Wisconsin to graduate from the United States Military Academy, West Point. She has led a life, fighting to shatter people's preconceived notions about individuals' abilities and to create opportunities for others.

**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. At the core of **GAN's** mission is the realization that greater steps needed to be taken to increase the number of: (i) students studying science, mathematics, technology and engineering ("targeted fields"); (ii) female students choosing occupations in these targeted fields; and (iii) workforce-ready graduates for the 21st century labor market who reflect a diversity of aptitudes and cultural perspectives, and who possess a personal foundation to contribute in a global society.

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

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