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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 7, 2007

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NYLC Honors Philadelphia Educator Edison Freire with Alec Dickson Servant Leader Award

The National Youth Leadership Council will honor Philadelphia educator Edison Freire with the Alec Dickson Servant Leader Award. The award, which recognizes leaders in the service-learning movement, will be presented at The 18th Annual National Service-Learning Conference, March 28-31, 2007, in Albuquerque.

In 1995, Freire, a native of Ecuador, was teaching science in a underfunded and technologically forgotten school in North Philadelphia. Many of his students were unmotivated, often absent and pessimistic about their future. The students recognized that without access to technology, their futures were severely limited. Freire responded with vision, leadership and a leap of faith, promising his students that they would acquire computers for the school. He led his students on a path of discovery, learning and empowerment, as together they learned computer refurbishing skills, went out and acquired donated computers and built mini-labs for their classrooms.

This experience led Freire to develop the UrbanTech Project. UrbanTech provides long-term support for urban youths through service-learning and school-to-work experiences — beginning in middle school and continuing on past high school graduation. UrbanTech has established a student-run center for recycling and refurbishing computers that provides students with a broad range of experiences, including business administration, computer recycling, and providing technical support in the community. Refurbished computers are placed in area classrooms and nonprofit community agencies that would otherwise be unable to afford them. UrbanTech engages the hearts, souls and intellects of youths as they transform their schools and communities through leadership and service.

“Alec Dickson admired people whose lives were marked by courage, compassion and creativity,” says NYLC President and CEO Jim Keilsmeier. “Edison Freire delivers on all counts.”

NYLC annually presents Alec Dickson Servant Leader Award to exemplary leaders who have inspired the service-learning field, positively affected the lives of young people and motivated others to take up the banner of service. It is named for British humanitarian Alec Dickson (1914-94) — founder of Community Service Volunteers and Voluntary Service Overseas — whose vision, innovation and commitment inspired many individuals to lead lives of service. Dickson was the honorary Board Chair of NYLC.

More information about the conference can be found at www.nylc.org/conference.

About The National Service-Learning Conference

The National Service Learning-Conference is the largest gathering of youths and practitioners from the service-learning movement. In 2006, it drew nearly 3,000 participants from all 50 states and 12 other countries.

About NYLC

NYLC has been at the center of service-learning program and policy development since 1983. It annually convenes The National Service-Learning Conference, offers adult and youth trainings and develops service-learning resources. For more information, please visit www.nylc.org.

About Service-Learning

Service-learning is a teaching method that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and communities. It integrates service with established learning objectives, emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving, and tackles real issues such as hunger, ecological concerns and diversity.

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