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**HIGHMARK HEALTHY HIGH 5 AWARDS \$2.3 MILLION GRANT TO THE
CENTER SAFE SCHOOLS**

*New partnership created with the Department of Education to support the expansion of
its bullying prevention program*

Pittsburgh (August 28, 2007) – The Highmark Foundation, through its Highmark Healthy High 5 initiative, today announced a \$2.3 million grant and a new partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Center for Safe Schools in an effort to address the issue of bullying.

Studies have shown that 77 percent of students report that they have been bullied mentally, verbally or physically in school. To help address this serious issue, Highmark Healthy High 5 will provide this three-year grant to the Center for Safe Schools to support expansion of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and provide further support to schools in instituting bullying prevention programs across the Foundation’s 49-county service region. The program, PA CARES (Creating an Atmosphere of Respect and Environment for Success), will provide support, resources and materials to 118 school districts across the service region. Additionally, it will support professional development for existing Olweus trainers and provide for new ones. The Olweus method has demonstrated significant results in decreasing bullying behaviors.

“The Highmark Foundation believes it is important to support anti-bullying efforts since bullying is correlated with increased reports of physical illness in children and adolescents,” said Yvonne Cook, president of the Highmark Foundation. “We know that bullying is a serious issue facing our schools and communities and we are pleased to be partnering with the Department of Education through the Center for Safe Schools to reduce the incidence of bullying and improve the overall climate for students.”

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Through the grant, the Center for Safe Schools will work to provide school-wide support and help school personnel strengthen their efforts to eliminate bullying behaviors and provide safe learning environments.

“Safety in our schools cannot be an after thought,” said Lynn Cromley, director, Center for Schools and Communities, Center for Safe Schools. “It’s indisputably related to academic achievement and a basic need that must be met before any learning or teaching can take place.”

Bullying Prevention Initiatives

The issue of bullying is one of five components of Highmark Healthy High 5, a five-year, \$100 million initiative of the Highmark Foundation aimed to reverse the current trends in children’s health. Bullying is a serious public health issue that affects countless children and adolescents every day. The goal of Highmark Healthy High 5, through the support of bullying prevention programs and initiatives, is to help reduce the incidences of bullying in schools to help children and adolescents lead happier, healthier lives.

The Highmark Foundation is presenting an educational summit as part of the Highmark Healthy High 5 initiative to address the issue of bullying. The Bullying Prevention Institute is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 4 and Friday, Oct. 5, 2007 at Hershey Lodge in Hershey, Pa. The two-day event, planned in collaboration with the Office of Community Health, Conemaugh Health System, is geared for education professionals to learn bullying prevention solutions. The summit features national experts on topics such as cyberbullying and relational violence. All attendees will receive the tools and resources needed to create or improve bullying prevention efforts at their school. A special student forum will provide a framework for youth committed to working within their student body to end bullying.

About Highmark Healthy High 5

Highmark Healthy High 5 is a five-year, \$100 million initiative of the Highmark Foundation aimed to reverse the current trends in children's health and to promote lifelong healthy habits in children throughout the 49 counties served by the Highmark Foundation. Highmark Healthy High 5 addresses five critical children's health issues, including nutrition, physical activity, self-esteem, grieving and bullying — through education, communications, volunteerism, grants and programming.

Center for Safe Schools

In 1995, Act 26, the Safe Schools Act, created an Office of Safe Schools within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Under the direction of the PDE, the Center for Safe Schools performs many of the duties defined by Act 26 and is one of the 19 state-wide School Safety Centers recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. These duties include data collection, assisting schools in meeting the requirements of Act 26 and providing resources to educators on a variety of programs and issues. The Center for Safe Schools works in partnership with the PDE and Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's schools by serving as a clearing house of information on school safety and youth violence prevention programs.

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