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Jan. 17, 2013

## **SIMMONS LUMINARY AWARD HONORS EDUCATION TRANSFORMERS**

DALLAS (SMU) – Educators dedicated to promoting evidence-based change for the betterment of students will be honored Jan. 24, 2013, by SMU’s Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. The Dallas Arboretum; Daniel P. King, superintendent of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo School District in South Texas; and America’s Promise Alliance will receive Luminary Awards at 6:30 p.m. in the Martha Proctor Mack Grand Ballroom in the Umphrey Lee Center.

From introducing children to the world of science through nature, to reviving poor performing Texas school districts, to creating a nationwide alliance dedicated to helping children and youth complete their education, the honorees have developed programs that serve as models.

- The educational programs at the **Dallas Arboretum** introduce more effective instruction to more than 100,000 children in life and earth science each year.
- Under Superintendent **Daniel P. King’s** leadership, several Texas school districts have been transformed from among the poorest performing to national models of success.
- **America’s Promise Alliance** brings together more than 400 organizations dedicated to stemming the nation’s high dropout rate.

“The 2013 Luminary recipients are driven by the same level of dedication to do whatever it takes to impact students and get them engaged in learning,” says David Chard, Leon Simmons Endowed Dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. “America’s Promise Alliance, The Dallas Arboretum and Superintendent King deeply understand their mission and with data have designed innovative approaches that work. Once students can understand that their community, region and nation are behind them, their aspirations become real.”

The Luminary Award was created in 2009 by the Simmons School to honor individuals and organizations that have shown an extraordinary commitment to improving people’s lives through education. The award is given annually to a local, regional and national recipient.

The **Dallas Arboretum** brings nature to Pre-K through high school students in their classrooms and provides hands-on programs at the Arboretum about plants and geology correlated to school curriculums. Other education programs are tailored to scouts, after-school programs and those with physical or developmental disabilities. The eight-acre Rory Meyers Children’s Adventure Garden, opening at the Arboretum in the spring, will create an outdoor science laboratory with 17 thematic galleries. The Simmons School

works closely with Arboretum educators evaluating the effectiveness of their work. Research shows that Arboretum lessons improve students' science knowledge and their performance on standardized tests. Maria Conroy, Arboretum vice president of research and education, will accept the award.

**Daniel P. King**, the 2013 Texas Superintendent of the Year, has pioneered school programs that significantly reduce dropout rates and increase college enrollment rates. As superintendent of Hidalgo ISD and now Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, King created Early College High Schools featuring dual college credit for high-schoolers. As a result, dropout rates have decreased by 90 percent and the number of graduates enrolling in college has doubled. Hidalgo ISD, 99 percent Hispanic and 93 percent disadvantaged students, has been recognized as the most outstanding school district in Texas, and *U.S. News & World Report* named its high school No. 11 in the nation. The program's success has inspired statewide legislation designed to curb the dropout rate by supporting partnerships between school districts and community colleges.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell is the founding chair of **America's Promise Alliance**, a partnership of more than 400 organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. Alma Powell now chairs the partnership, created in 1997 at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. Through research, education and mobilization the Alliance focuses on ending the high school dropout crisis in the United States. Research sponsored by America's Promise shows that national high school graduation rates are improving – 75 percent of students graduated in 2009 – but challenges remain for the 1,500 high schools that account for nearly half of the dropouts. The Alliance's work also includes supporting children displaced from their homes after Hurricane Katrina, sponsoring the White House Education Round Table, honoring outstanding journalists who cover education and recognizing the 100 best communities for young people. John Gomperts, CEO of America's Promise Alliance, will accept the award.

*SMU is a nationally ranked private university in Dallas founded 100 years ago. Today, SMU enrolls nearly 11,000 students who benefit from the academic opportunities and international reach of seven degree-granting schools.*

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