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For Immediate Release

FOURTH ANNUAL *FERIA PARA APRENDER*™ EXPANDS REGIONALLY TO THE EXPO CENTER, GROUPS PREPARE FOR 10,000 SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS AND CHILDREN

‘The Learning Fair’ Has Gained Traction as Region’s Largest Education Event, 2010 FERIA Introduces Workforce-Driven Career Pods, New Dual Language Classroom, and State’s Largest Book Give-A-Way

AUSTIN, Texas (February 2, 2010) – When the FERIA PARA APRENDER™ (The Learning Fair) takes place this Saturday, it will not only mark several new milestones for Central Texas, but it will reflect a year-round focus to train local education organizations on the demographic shifts and mobilize them to create the future workforce of Central Texas.

Headed into its fourth year as the nation’s largest Spanish language only education event, the FERIA has expanded to a regional effort in 2010 to include more ISDs in the area and more than 100 exhibits by colleges, universities, nonprofits, and scholarship groups. In preparation for Central Texas FERIA, more than 300 volunteers have completed training to learn how to better engage Spanish speaking parents. More than 18,500 free books are also being distributed at the event, making the FERIA the single largest book give-a-way in Texas history.

New to this year’s Central Texas FERIA is a mock dual language classroom with live teaching demonstrations for parents and four interactive workforce zones, or “career pods,” tied to the workforce needs of Central Texas: Health Care, Teaching, Digital Media, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). **The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 6** and will be at a larger venue at the Travis County Expo.

“The FERIA is not an ordinary education fair. This is a mobilization event for the region and a once-a-year opportunity for parents to be fully immersed in a real-world educational experience that is completely framed around them in their own language,” said Sylvia Acevedo, founder of the FERIA PARA APRENDER and the chairwoman of the event. “These are the parents of our fastest-growing population in schools so we all gain a competitive advantage when we can help them master the U.S. educational pathway for their children’s academic success.”

FERIA PARA APRENDER was created in 2007 by Acevedo, CEO of CommuniCard, as Austin’s first and largest Spanish language only education effort organized citywide for parents of English Language Learners (ELLs). Since its launch, Acevedo and her team have expanded it outside of Austin, recently drawing more than 20,000 to a FERIA in Los Angeles in August 2009. They are planning other FERIAS across Texas in 2010.

(more)

4th ANNUAL FERIA PARA APRENDER EXPANDS REGIONALLY, ADDS WORKFORCE FOCUS AND NEW EDUCATION RESOURCES – ADD ONE

“The City of Austin is working diligently to improve our work interacting with and engaging our Spanish-speaking population,” said Mayor Lee Leffingwell. “I applaud the work that the organizers of the Feria are doing, and the City is proud to support their effort with information and engagement opportunities in Spanish.”

“Everyone regardless of differences in views stands to benefit if we can create strategies around our growth trends and recognize the unique position that Texas has,” said Kathrin Brewer, Executive Director of Austin Partners in Education, the 2010 co-producer of the Feria. “We can create one of the most prosperous places to live and work by creating a massive, bilingually educated workforce that attracts national and global development.”

At this year’s Central Texas Feria, there will be an estimated 100,000 square feet of space devoted to hands-on interactive booths and “how-to” areas that correlate with the educational pathway from pre-K to college and career. These areas include:

- 4 Career Pods focused on Health Care, Teaching, Digital Media, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) each staffed with mentors and professionals
- Theatrical reading groups performing the popular children’s story, *Where the Wild Things Are*, another book that will be given away by the thousands at the event
- A photo visualization area where every child gets a photo in cap and gown or professional attire
- Mock bilingual education and dual language classrooms representing major ISDs
- Hands-on science and technology activities such as robotics, gaming, and medical demonstrations
- A Commitment Zone™ where parents and students articulate and illustrate their educational aspirations on miles of paper

“We applaud the Feria for its role as an alignment tool for our nonprofit educational infrastructure,” said Judge Sam Biscoe of Travis County. “Because of the event’s approach, we see that it is helping to close the educational divide by giving thousands of families the education information and opportunities they might otherwise not discover on their own.”

More than 30 organizations, think tanks, and agencies are helping to organize 2010 Central Texas Feria, including **CommuniCard, Austin Partners in Education, Wells Fargo, City of Austin, Travis County, Univision TV, Univision Radio, *Ahora Si*, Austin ISD, E3 Alliance, Austin Community College, St. David’s Foundation, Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Pflugerville ISD, Seton Family of Hospitals**, and many others. Book underwriters include Wal-Mart Foundation, First Book, Scholastic Inc., Mexican Consulate, Austin Community Foundation, and Freescale Semiconductor. More than 400 volunteers will be at the event with many student and civic groups represented around the area.