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Groups to hold bullying prevention conference; invest \$50,000 in challenge for students to get creative about antibullying education initiatives in southwestern Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh, PA October 18, 2011 –The Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation, in alliance with the Pittsburgh Foundation and educational partners including the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA), will hold a Bullying Prevention Conference on November 4, 2011, at California University of Pennsylvania (Cal U).

At the conference, the foundations will announce a request for proposal (RFP) for students, along with teacher and administrator approval, to develop creative approaches in support of antibullying education initiatives in southwestern Pennsylvania. They have made an initial commitment of \$50,000 to fund the conference and the first round of grants associated with the request for proposal. The foundation will announce the proposals accepted for funding at the elementary, middle and high school levels in April 2012. “As the population most affected by it, we feel that students must play a key role in antibullying strategy development,” said Chris Sweeney, board member, Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation. “We hope that access to these financial resources will galvanize peer students to take action and address this issue together with educators through the use of technology, new media and other unique approaches.”

Dr. Adolph Brown, a passionate educator and renowned inspirational speaker who has become a leader in developing innovative programs to tackle this critical issue, spoke at an annual event held by the Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation earlier this year and will be the keynote presenter at this regional kickoff event that will include up to 300 school counselors and educators from school districts in the region. Cal U is a regional leader in school counselor education, making it an appropriate regional venue for this conference. Michelle Brand, President of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association, will present on “The Changing State Standards, PA Regulations and Legal Implications for Schools.” Cyberbullying will be addressed via a technology presentation by three leaders from Clemson University and the International Bullying Prevention Association (IBPA).

“Bullying among children and adolescents has become almost epidemic and has been receiving increased attention over the past several years. It is an issue that everyone has seen, felt, or been directly affected by. School counselors are frontline educators who address the prevalence of bullying in the schools. The Ruscitto Foundation is to be commended for its focus on this critical issue and for providing professional development that addresses strategies and resources for reducing incidences of bullying and for helping those who have been victimized by bullies. Recent budget cuts in education have reduced both professional development opportunities and resources. Programs such as this are to be commended. In a much-needed time, this initiative will impact the youth of tomorrow with tools and resources for educators to stop bullying,” said Michelle Brand, president (2011-2012), Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA).

“The practice of bullying, particularly cyberbullying, has become a significant issue across our nation and has potentially devastating consequences for our children and their families. The Pittsburgh Foundation is pleased and excited to partner with the Ruscitto Foundation on such a critically important initiative,” commented Kevin Jenkins, senior program officer and director of community initiatives for the Pittsburgh Foundation.

About the Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation

The Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation was established as a legacy to an energetic young leader and visionary who devoted his time to helping people grow and pursue their dreams. The foundation invests in a broad range of educational, charitable, and research endeavors that reflect Marc’s own wide-ranging interests. For more information, please visit <http://www.marcusruscittofoundation.org>.

About the Pittsburgh Foundation

Established in 1945, the Pittsburgh Foundation is one of the nation’s oldest community foundations and is the 15th largest of more than 700 community foundations across the United States. The foundation has strengthened its focus on community and the positive impact it strives to achieve through its grant making, the engagement of its donors in critical regional issues, and its activities around convening and leadership in collaboration with funding and civic partners. For more information, please visit <http://www.pittsburghfoundation.org>.

About the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association

The Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA) is a professional organization that represents school counseling in Pennsylvania. The mission of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association is to expand the image and influence of professional school counselors, to promote professional and ethical practice, and to advocate for equity and access for all students. The Pennsylvania School Counselors Association is the keystone that strengthens the image and influence of professional school counselors through advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change. PSCA empowers professional school counselors with the knowledge, skills, and resources to promote student success in the global community.

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Available for interviews: Chris Sweeney, the Marcus L. Ruscitto Charitable Foundation; John Ellis, the Pittsburgh Foundation; Michelle Brand, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association