



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Four Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholars Recognized for Social Enterprise Academic Achievement at Mentoring and Leadership Conference

March 30, 2011 (New York, New York) – The Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF) recently announced the recipients of its four merit prizes: the Nike Prize, the Spike Lee Youth Motivation Award, the Unilever Legacy of Leadership Award and the Ralph E. Ward Achievement Award. The awards, which recognize public service, academic achievement and leadership among JRF Scholars, were presented during a luncheon held at New York City’s Grand Hyatt Hotel on March 6, 2011 as part of the Foundation’s Annual Mentoring and Leadership Conference.

Aaron Ragsdale is the starting power forward and captain of the Tuskegee University Men’s Basketball Team. He recently led the school to its first conference championship in thirty-one years. Aaron, a senior majoring in Electrical Engineering, saw a need in his adopted campus community to expose more young people to the importance of science and technology. He partnered with two local middle schools and one high school to create a bi-weekly in-class program for the middle schools and an after-school program for the high school students to share his love of science. Aaron has demonstrated that it is never too early to begin giving back.

Aaron was awarded the Nike Prize, a \$1,000 cash award, which recognizes sports and its power to affect change, celebrating the impact an athlete and sport can have on society. It is granted to a scholar athlete who exemplifies through his or her actions, the ways in which commitment, advocacy and innovation can unite to challenge a community to change.

The Spike Lee Youth Motivation Award was established by the acclaimed filmmaker and is given to the JRF Scholar who has and has made a particularly enduring impact through a commitment to serving others. The \$2,500 award is presented to the JRF Scholar who has developed the most innovative and practical method of meeting the needs of an individual, group, or organization.

Amber Spears is a junior majoring in Civil & Environmental Engineering. Very active in campus life at the University of Michigan, she is the Community Service Committee Chair of the National Society of Black Engineers and as Council Leader of the Mustard Seed Campus Ministry Amber has developed workshops on campus surrounding Christian issues and is a member of the Better Living Using Engineering Lab dedicated to Hagley Gap, Jamaica. Amber was awarded the Spike Lee Motivation Award because of her work with the organization HOPE, which stands for (Helping Our Prisoners Elevate). She described her participation as “life altering” and now considers working with prisoners as a central part of her life’s mission. In addition to her work with HOPE, Amber helped to organize a “Back to School Supply Giveaway and Family Fun Day” for local youth.

Biomedical Engineering major **Alexandra Almore** has been committed to public service since serving as President of her high school class, where she volunteered her time and organizational skills to YStreet, a youth non-smoking campaign in Virginia. In addition to maintaining a high grade point average

and performing as a standout member of the Cross Country and Track and Field teams in high school, she also found time to mentor youth at a day camp sponsored by the Children's Museum of Richmond. Last year, Alexandra, continued her legacy of service as Campus Advocacy Director for STOP (Students Taking On Poverty) at Harvard University. She expanded the scope of the position by spearheading a well designed publicity campaign to emphasize the educational component of the program and encourage more community involvement.

Alexandra received the Unilever Legacy of Leadership Award which recognizes the Scholar who exhibits outstanding leadership qualities, making a significant impact through a public service project and has made a positive impact on society at large. Established in 2003, the \$10,000 award may be used towards tuition or a charity of choice toward furthering a community service initiative.

Rachelle Cordova, the 2010 Ralph E. Ward Achievement Award recipient, graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in English and a 3.98 grade point average. As the JRF Scholar in the class of 2010, with the highest cumulative grade point average, Rachelle received a \$10,000 cash prize.

While a JRF Scholar, Rachelle expressed a strong passion for literature. and participated in an undergraduate research project involving feminist literary research on Modernist texts in the 20th century. She was also heavily involved in the English department's creative writing program, regularly producing and revising poetry and short fiction works.

Rachelle spent significant time participating in community service activities. She volunteered at Casa de Esperanza; a nonprofit organization that connects the Latino community to government and community resources. There, she staffed the Information Center, answering questions and providing visitors vital information. Rachelle was also a tutor at the Plymouth Youth Center, where she tutored more than thirty students.

Rachelle currently works in the production department for the University of Minnesota Press. Her goal is to move east and continue working in the publishing industry. She is also considering extending her academic career in English and plans to go to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D., with the ultimate goal of becoming a professor of English.

Established in 1973, the Jackie Robinson Foundation is the nation's premier education and leadership development program. Transcending financial assistance, the Foundation equips its scholarship recipients with a comprehensive set of support services including mentoring, career guidance and practical life skills, resulting in a nearly 100% graduation rate, more than twice the national average for minority students. The over 1,400 JRF alumni are both leaders in their professional fields and consummate ambassadors of Jackie Robinson's legacy of community service. This 2010-2011 academic year, JRF provided generous financial aid and program support to 220 Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholars representing 31 states and the District of Columbia and enrolled in 92 different colleges and universities across the country.

For additional information about The Jackie Robinson Foundation and its Scholars, please visit: www.jackierobinson.org

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