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**9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> GRADERS SHARE IDEAS ON HEALTH CARE REFORM IN ANNUAL  
SPEECH COMPETITION PRESENTED BY PHILADELPHIA ACADEMIES, INC.**

**Student Speakers Take Center Stage as Corporate Leaders Judge March 3rd  
Event at Independence Blue Cross**

PHILADELPHIA (February 22, 2010) – Twenty eight Philadelphia high school freshmen and sophomores will take to the stage in a judged speech competition aimed at helping students develop their oral and written communications skills and community networks. The annual event, the All-Academies Speech Competition, is a signature program of Philadelphia Academies, Inc., a nonprofit youth development organization that expands life and economic options for public high school students through career-focused programming and activities.

The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders have worked over the past two months to prepare their two-minute presentations on the timely topic, “Health Care Reform: What are your ideas?” Now, on Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the students will have a chance to share their thoughts with some of the city’s top corporate and community leaders. The daylong event includes a 9:30 a.m. presentation by Toastmasters International on “The Art of Public Speaking,” as well as time for practice speeches beginning at 1:00 p.m. The official speech competition will take place from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The event, which is open to parents, family and friends, will be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of Independence Blue Cross at 1901 Market Street in Philadelphia. This is the 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive year Independence Blue Cross has supported the event.

Representatives from nine area corporations will serve as judges for the annual speech competition, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year. Participants include: ACE Group; Bank of America; Citizens Bank; CLEAR Wireless, LLC; Comcast Corporation; PECO, An Exelon Company; The Gray Charitable Trust; Rohm and Haas Company; and SenGeno Group. Judges evaluate students on their presentation, control, articulation, volume, energy and poise. Competition prizes, including a laptop computer and digital camera, are presented by CLEAR to the top five students.

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“Philadelphia Academies, Inc. was started 40 years ago by a community activist and business leaders as a drop-out prevention program,” said Lisa Nutter, president of Philadelphia Academies, Inc. “Today, we partner with 16 Philadelphia public high schools to deliver a curriculum focused on career paths. This career academy approach recognizes that one’s skills, knowledge, interests and values are inherently linked to their economic opportunities. The annual All-Academies Speech Competition is one example of how we work with students to teach them 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and build networks that will help them succeed,” she said.

Independence Blue Cross associates who are members of the Big Blue Toastmasters club, an international nonprofit organization that helps develop communication and leadership skills, will conduct training and practice sessions with the students to prepare them for speech day.

“Supporting Philadelphia’s youth is a special part of our commitment to strengthening the well-being of our community,” said John Clayton, Independence Blue Cross workforce development manager. “The speech contest is a great opportunity for these students to have their voices heard, while gaining valuable public speaking skills that will help them in their future careers. The students also take advantage of the day to meet and network with our sponsor companies and judges. In fact, in the past, a few winners even joined Independence Blue Cross as summer interns.”

Topics for the annual speech competition reflect timely subjects and current events. This year, the students address health care reform. In 2009, students answered the question: “How can I contribute to the Green Movement and encourage others?”

### **Schedule**

#### **20<sup>th</sup> Annual All-Academies Speech Competition Wednesday, March 3, 2010**

8:30–9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast
9:00-9:30 a.m.	Greetings and Instructions
9:30–11:45 a.m.	Toastmasters International: “The Art of Public Speaking”
Noon-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-1:45 p.m.	Practice Speeches
1:45-2:00 p.m.	Parents, Families, Friends Arrive
2:00-4:00 p.m.	Speech Competition
4:00-4:30 p.m.	Photos

### **Judges**

- Deborah Buhles, Senior Director of Corporate Administration, Comcast Corporation
- Lisa DiStephano, Marketing Manager, CLEAR Wireless, LLC
- Eden Kratchman, Vice President, Global Corporate Giving, ACE Group
- Mellanie Lassiter, Corporate Contributions Representative, PECO, An Exelon Company
- Henri Moore, Vice President for Community Relations, Citizens Bank
- Deborah O'Brien, Vice President, Market Development Manager, Bank of America
- June O'Neill, Administrator, The Gray Charitable Trust
- Stephen Rauscher, Former Vice President & Director of Operations, Rohm and Haas Company
- Nathaniel Thompson, Founder, SenGeno Group (and Philadelphia Academies, Inc. graduate)

### **About Philadelphia Academies, Inc.**

Philadelphia Academies, Inc. is a nonprofit youth development organization working to change life outcomes for students through first-of-its-kind career academies. The oldest and the original business/education partnership in the country, today, Philadelphia Academies, Inc. oversees 10 academy programs in 16 Philadelphia public high schools, serving 4,500 students each year. Academies include: Automotive and Mechanical Engineering; Applied Electrical Science; Biotechnology; Business and Technology; Communications; Environmental Science; Health and Life Sciences; Hotel, Restaurant, Travel and Tourism; Process Technology; and Urban Education. Programs are designed to motivate young people to stay engaged in school, and are structured to create supportive networks for them in the real world.

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