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**STARLIGHT STARBRIGHT CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION
AND THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT
TEAM UP TO PROVIDE ASTHMA MANAGEMENT SKILLS TO
SCHOOL STAFF IN CALIFORNIA**

LOS ANGELES (October x, 2005) - The California Endowment and the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation today announced the release of an asthma tool kit for schools in California. Created by Starlight Starbright with a grant from The California Endowment, the Asthma Tool Kit for Schools will ensure that school personnel are educated about asthma. The kits will be provided free of charge to schools in California through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health.

Asthma is a nationwide epidemic. In California, about 1 in 10 children under 18 years of age have been diagnosed with asthma and had symptoms within the last 12 months.¹ Nationwide, roughly 14 million school days are missed every year due to asthma, and 23.6 percent of children with asthma miss school some time during the year due to disease.² Asthma hospitalizations cost \$480 million in California in 2000.³ Asthma also reveals a troubling picture of health disparities, with lower income, minority children disproportionately affected by the disease and experiencing significantly higher rates of hospitalizations and death.

"The health risks associated with asthma are serious and can be life-threatening," said Marion Standish, Disparities in Health program director for The California Endowment. "Due to the shortage of health professionals in California's schools it is essential that all school personnel be educated about asthma, and the environmental triggers and hazards that exacerbate asthma in children so that schools can make changes in their environments to mitigate the risk factors."

The "School Asthma Tool Kit" helps support the goals of The Endowment's two asthma initiatives, which are part of the foundation's Disparities in Health program. The Endowment's \$12 million, three-year Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA) Initiative supports 12 community-based

¹ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. California Health Interview Survey Fact Sheet: Asthma Symptom Prevalence in California in 2001. Los Angeles, University of California; Spring/Summer 2002.

² Mannino DM, Homa DM, Akinvami LI, Moorman JE, Swynn C, Redd SC. Surveillance for Asthma – United States, 1980-1999. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. March 29, 2002; 51(SS-1):1-13.

³ California Department of Health Services. Strategic Plan for Asthma in California. Sacramento 2002.

partnerships throughout California to identify and reduce asthma triggers in the places where children live, learn and play. The foundation's \$3.6 million, three-year California Asthma Among the School-Aged (CAASA) Initiative focuses on improving the clinical diagnosis, treatment and management of asthma among school-aged children in seven clinics throughout California. The overarching goal of The Endowment's asthma program is to reduce health disparities and improve the quality of life for school-aged children with asthma.

Starlight Starbright's goal was to produce and package a comprehensive, best practices "School Asthma Tool kit" to make the school a safer environment for children with asthma, and help educate children and adults about asthma management. The tool kit is designed to deepen an understanding of asthma and asthma management among diverse school professionals.

"Starlight Starbright is delighted to partner with The California Endowment to help educate school professionals on how to make schools a safer environment for children with asthma," said Starlight Starbright CEO Paula Van Ness.

The Asthma Tool Kit, which includes Starlight Starbright's popular "Quest for the Code®" CD-ROM for children, will be provided to school nurses in partnership with the California School Nurses Organization, to asthma coalitions in partnership with the Community Action to Fight Asthma, and to American Lung Associations throughout California in partnership with the American Lung Association of California.

The tool kit was developed with the input of a statewide coalition of asthma experts, including representatives from the California Department of Health Services, California Department of Education, Community Action to Fight Asthma, American Lung Association, Asthma and Allergy Foundation, Los Angeles Unified School District and numerous schools and county health departments.

The California Endowment, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment makes grants to organizations and institutions that directly benefit the health and well-being of the people of California. For more information, visit The Endowment's Web site at www.calendow.org.

Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to transforming the lives of seriously ill children and their families through imaginative programs that educate, uplift their spirits, foster a sense of community and help alleviate the pain and fear of prolonged illness. Starlight Starbright offers an impressive array of in-hospital, outpatient, school and home-based programs and services that touch the lives of more than 180,000 children and families each month. To learn more about the organization, visit their web site at www.slsb.org.

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