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THE MIND TRUST ANNOUNCES SELECTION OF TWO NEW EDUCATION ENTREPRENEUR FELLOWS

Indianapolis, IN – The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based non-profit supporting education innovation and entrepreneurship, announced the selection of two new Education Entrepreneur Fellows today. The Fellowship acts as a national incubator for transformative education ventures. Two talented entrepreneurs were recently selected from an applicant pool of 405 people from 44 states and 20 countries. As Fellows, the entrepreneurs receive two years of salary (\$90,000/year) with full benefits, a start-up stipend, and ongoing support from The Mind Trust Board and staff, enabling them to develop, build, and launch their initiatives in Indianapolis and nationwide. The Mind Trust awarded Fellowships to the following individuals, whose programs are also described below:

- **Ms. Stephanie Saroki** will use the Fellowship to launch Seton Education Partners, a new non-profit working to help struggling urban Catholic schools find alternatives to school closure. Nationwide, large numbers of urban Catholic schools serving disadvantaged students are closing because of financial challenges. Ms. Saroki's venture will help ensure that students in schools that close – as well as other local students – have high-quality education options. Seton Education Partners will focus initially on two strategies. First, it will provide guidance and technical assistance to Catholic parishes, dioceses, and independent religious orders considering leasing space to public secular charter schools and/or converting existing Catholic schools into public charter schools. Second, it will design new public secular charter school models that provide underserved children with an academically excellent and character-building education.

Interest in converting Catholic schools to charter schools is growing nationwide; seven Catholic schools in Washington, D.C. and eight in Miami recently converted to charter schools. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the Diocese of Brooklyn announced plans earlier this year to explore converting Catholic schools to charter schools.

Ms. Saroki has extensive experience in the field of education having served for six years as the Director of K-12 Education Programs at The Philanthropy Roundtable in Washington, D.C. She began her career in public education as a Teach For America corps member teaching high school English in Oakland, CA. Ms. Saroki co-founded Seton Education Partners in May 2009 with partner Scott Hamilton, a nationally known education entrepreneur who co-founded the high-performing KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) network of charter schools. Ms. Saroki received her B.A., *summa cum laude*, in Psychology and Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley, and her Master in Public Policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where she was a Dean's Fellow.

- **Mr. Jesse Hahnel** will use the Fellowship to develop and grow the Foster Youth Education Initiative, a project to ensure foster youth receive the educational advocacy and opportunities they need. Foster youth have some of the poorest educational outcomes of any group of students nationwide. They are more likely to perform below grade level, to have been held back, to drop out of high school and to have higher rates of absenteeism and disciplinary referrals than other students. Foster youth face challenges in adulthood, as well. Approximately 25% of former foster children experience homelessness and/or incarceration at some point in their lives; 33% receive public assistance; and unemployment rates top 50%. There are approximately 2,500 children living in foster care in Indianapolis right now. Communities across the U.S. desperately need improved strategies to better serve these vulnerable young people. Through his Foster Youth Education Initiative, Mr. Hahnel will leverage existing resources and facilitate cooperation among local agencies and public interest organizations to develop education advocacy systems. These systems identify foster youth showing

early signs of academic setbacks (e.g. absences, poor grades) then dispatch an education advocate to ensure the foster youth receives the supports and opportunities required to succeed in school.

Jeffrey Lozer of the Indiana Department of Child Services praised Mr. Hahnel's selection as a Fellow noting that "Mr. Hahnel's initiative is very timely and will help us effectively pursue our goals by increasing the collaboration of the existing government and non-profit sector programs and refocusing local efforts around ensuring foster youth have access to stable and effective schooling."

Mr. Hahnel's interest in education – and in particular foster youth – stems from his experience as a classroom teacher in public schools in Washington, D.C. and New York City following college. His extensive experience in education reform also includes leading the Research and Evaluation Team at the KIPP Foundation and working with Partners in School Innovation. Mr. Hahnel regularly advocates for individual foster youth and has worked at advocacy organizations such as Public Advocates Inc. and Stanford's Youth and Education Law Project. Mr. Hahnel earned a B.A., *cum laude*, in Mathematics from Harvard College in three years and graduated *Order of the Coif* from Stanford Law School. He is currently an attorney and Skadden Fellow at the National Center for Youth Law.

"We continue to be overwhelmed by the response to The Mind Trust's Education Entrepreneur Fellowship and the transformative ventures applicants propose," said David Harris, President and CEO of The Mind Trust. "The Fellows we are selecting today will make an enormous difference in the lives of some of the most challenged young people in Indianapolis and across the country."

Ms. Saroki and Mr. Hahnel join four Fellows selected by The Mind Trust in 2008. While just finishing their first year, the four current Fellows have already made great progress. Highlights include the launch of Summer Advantage USA by Fellow **Earl Martin Phalen**. Summer Advantage USA's summer learning and enrichment program piloted in Indianapolis with 800 students; on average, students showed three months of academic gains over just five weeks. Fellow **Celine Coggins** launched Teach Plus in Indianapolis this fall and secured a \$4 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Fellow **Abigail Falik** recently sent her first cohort of Global Citizen Year Fellows to Guatemala and Senegal to embark on six-month global service projects. Ms. Falik was recognized this year as an Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar and a Harvard Business School Social Entrepreneurship Fellow. Fellow **Michael Bitz** expanded the Youth Music Exchange into six new cities this year – Philadelphia, Denver, Columbus, Milwaukee, Tulsa, and El Centro, CA – and continues to operate in Indianapolis, New York City and San Diego.

About The Mind Trust

The Mind Trust is a non-profit organization whose mission is to dramatically improve public education for underserved students by empowering education entrepreneurs to develop or expand transformative education initiatives. To achieve its mission, The Mind Trust has two strategies: (1) a *nationally unique* Education Entrepreneur Fellowship that serves as an incubator for transformative education ventures; and (2) a Venture Fund to recruit to Indianapolis the nation's most successful entrepreneurial education initiatives. The Mind Trust has invested over \$3 million from its Venture Fund to successfully attract Teach For America, The New Teacher Project, College Summit and Diploma Plus to Indianapolis. *For more information about The Mind Trust, please visit www.themindtrust.org.*

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