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**Community Luminaries Attended the Youth Speak Collective Inaugural Gala  
and Raised Over \$50,000 for At-Risk Students in Pacoima**

**Los Angeles (October 4, 2011)** --The innovative group, Youth Speak Collective (YSC), hosted its first annual Gala Celebration at La Plaza de Culturas y Arte in downtown Los Angeles on September 24, 2011. The gala celebration was attended by close to 300 civic and community leaders and friends of YSC. The fundraiser acknowledged leaders who have been instrumental in building YSC's reputation as one of the leading youth development organizations in Pacoima. Over \$50,000 was raised to support YSC's cutting-edge programs in Los Angeles County.

*"We are grateful to the hundreds of supporters who came out to celebrate our five years of running effective youth development programs! It has been a journey and we are encouraged by our donors, friends and the students to continue growing and empowering new leaders for our community,"* said David Kietzman, YSC Executive Director.

Several leaders in education, the arts, community development and elected officials who have supported YSC's mission over last five years were in the audience. The "Imagine. Inspire. Ignite: Celebrating Five Years of Youth-led Action" Gala Celebration honored youth leaders and community partners whose work results in substantial contributions and leadership through philanthropy, educational and mentorship.

*"The Gala Celebration was an opportunity to recognize the hard work of Youth Speak for the past 5 years of enriching the lives of students in the North East San Fernando Valley. The Gala was a one of a kind event, with interactive stations that offered a fun-filled night for all those who attended. The event was a huge success in part to the partnerships Youth Speak has established over the years with other non-profits, businesses and community leaders. It is that partnership that will allow Youth Speak to continue its work for many more years to come,"* said Gemma Jimenez, Field Deputy from the office of California State Senator Alex Padilla.

Some of the students and their parents also enjoyed the celebration and listened to music from the world-renowned Paris Escovedo Project. Some of the guests received tickets from Chivas USA, La Plaza, Beta Natural Skincare and other product donations. Special thanks to sponsors, Wells Fargo, New York Life Insurance, The Southern California Gas Company, LAUSD, LA84 Foundation, Dignity Cigars, Hacienda del Rey Tequila, Hit+Run Production and The Smile Lounge.

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## The 2011 YSC's Awardees were:

- Youthful Funder: Jonathan Weedman, Wells Fargo Foundation
- Youth Advocate: Norma Cardenas, YSC Board Member
- Athletic Advocate: F. Patrick Escobar, LA84 Foundation
- Student Leader: Agustin Flores, San Fernando High School Student
- Founding Youth Leader: Evelyn Gomez, Harvard University, 2011

YSC focuses on transforming the physical and economic neighborhoods in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Some of the Youth Speak Collective's signature programs include Academic Support Services, Youth Development and Creative Expression programs, Project Youth Green (PYG) and Futbolito Pacoima. Currently, YSC serves approximately 500 youth a day and over 3,000 students a year through school based and community centered events.

Founded in 2006 by a handful of high school students and the current Executive Director, YSC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to empowering at-risk youth and their families with the skills necessary to pursue higher education and create strong communities. YSC annually helps more than 3,000 individuals, including some of the most disadvantaged youth and families in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. The organization provides a broad spectrum of integrated direct services designed to strengthen families, build self-sufficiency and guide them towards productive futures.

