



CONTACT:

Leon Rubin
Office Depot Foundation
561-251-8075
LRubin@jkggroup.com

Debby Dodge
USA TODAY
703-854-5917
DDodge@usatoday.com

OFFICE DEPOT FOUNDATION'S DREAM UP CAREER EXPLORATION PROGRAM HELPS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Program Offered to 10,000 Students in Collaboration with USA TODAY Education

BOCA RATON, Fla., April 7, 2011 – In an effort to address the alarming problem of middle school students dropping out of school, the [Office Depot Foundation](#) is teaming up with [USA TODAY Education](#) to help children explore – and possibly even experience – future career opportunities through the Dream UP Career Exploration Program.

“The opportunity to achieve success in school is dependent upon *staying* in school,” says Mary Wong, president of the Office Depot Foundation – the independent, non-profit foundation that serves as the primary charitable giving arm of Office Depot Inc. (NYSE: ODP). “By encouraging middle school students to begin to consider career opportunities, establish long-term goals and dream about what they might become in the future, the Dream UP Program represents a vitally important strategy that teachers and schools can use to keep students in the classroom, rather than losing them to the streets.”

This spring, approximately 10,000 students in 24 middle schools in eight states are participating in the program, which was introduced in 2010. Throughout the 10-week curriculum, students read and analyze real-world information found in the print and online editions of USA TODAY. They learn about the latest workplace trends in technology, business and industry. Guided by their teachers, they explore and research numerous career options that they discover – and each student develops a career portfolio.

At the end of the career exploration process, the students write an essay about their “Dream Job.” The best essays are judged in a national contest; five winners get the opportunity to live their dreams for a day.

In 2010, more than 35,000 middle school students in 75 classrooms in 14 states and a U.S. school in Germany explored their personal interests and career goals through the Dream UP Program. Dream UP Essay Contest winners had the chance to experience such diverse jobs as a financial analyst, Coast Guardsman, veterinarian and chef.

The winners included Vivek Narayanswamy from Coral Springs Middle School in Florida, who wrote, “From when I was young, I have always had a special aptitude in math. Being a financial analyst is the perfect career for me. My



education, experience, skills and personality match those needed to be a financial analyst like pieces of a puzzle.” Vivek spent a day in Finance at Office Depot Global Headquarters for his dream job.

Another winner, Joshua Davis from Orville Wright Middle School in Los Angeles, also aimed high. He wrote about wanting to be in the Coast Guard and, during his dream job experience, he was able to do just that. He got to fly in a helicopter.

“We are excited to move forward with year two of Dream UP,” says Debby Dodge, director of USA TODAY Education Programs. “This education initiative clearly demonstrates the power of real-life work experience and how connecting students to their dream jobs can significantly impact their futures in a very positive way.”

The Dream UP Program will be offered again in the fall semester, when another 22,500 students are expected to participate. To learn more, please visit <http://www.officedepotfoundation.org/education.asp> or <http://usatodayeducate.com/wordpress/index.php/dream-up-office-depot>.

###

About the Office Depot Foundation

The [Office Depot Foundation](http://www.officedepotfoundation.org) is an independent foundation (tax exempt under IRC Sec. 501(c)(3)) that serves as the independent charitable giving arm of Office Depot, Inc. In keeping with its mission, Listen Learn Care[®], the Foundation supports a variety of programs that help children succeed in school and in life; enable civil society (non-profit) organizations to become more efficient and effective; help people and businesses prepare for disasters, as well as recover and rebuild afterwards; strengthen local communities through grants, product donations and volunteerism; and encourage community development through entrepreneurship and economic innovation.

About USA TODAY

Since 1983, USA TODAY has made a commitment to education that is unparalleled in the industry. [USA TODAY's Education program](#) is currently in place in over 30,000 K-12 classes across the country and on more than 450 university and college campuses, impacting over one million students daily. Educators have reached out to USA TODAY for over 25 years because of the unique format, credible non-fiction text and topics that are relevant and motivating for students. Students like reading USA TODAY because of its unique style, bold color and graphics and easy-to-access information. USA TODAY covers contemporary issues that students can relate to and easily understand.

USA TODAY is a multi-platform news and information media company. Founded in 1982, USA TODAY's mission is to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation. Today, through its newspaper, website and mobile platforms, USA TODAY connects readers and engages the national conversation. USA TODAY, the nation's number one newspaper in print circulation with an average of more than 1.8 million daily, and USATODAY.com, an award-winning newspaper website launched in 1995, reach a combined 5.9 million readers daily. USA TODAY is a leader in mobile applications with more than eight million downloads on mobile devices. The USA TODAY brand also includes USA TODAY Education and USA TODAY Sports Weekly. USA TODAY is owned by Gannett Co., Inc. (NYSE: GCI).

