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## **Governor Baldacci Proclaims First Annual GEAR UP Day**

Sept. 11, 2009 – GEAR UP Maine announced today its celebration of the First Annual National GEAR UP Day. This day commemorates 10 years of success for the transformative Gaining Early Awareness and Education for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a college access program created during the Clinton Administration. Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP has improved educational outcomes for millions of low-income students across the United States.

Governor Baldacci showed his support for this national celebration by proclaiming September 18 Maine State GEAR UP Day.

To date, GEAR UP Maine has served over 3,000 students in 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade, and supports 18 school districts in ensuring that all students are academically and socially prepared for postsecondary education. \$1.5 million per year is allocated in scholarships to eligible Maine GEAR UP graduates who are enrolled in undergraduate degree programs.

National GEAR UP Day is a time to celebrate these accomplishments in the local community. Kathryn Markovchick, Director of GEAR UP Maine, shares: “We are thrilled to be joining GEAR UP programs across the country in recognizing the importance of this work and the great strides that have been made over the last ten years to ensure that more students are prepared for and aspire to higher education.”

This program has a proven history of successful outcomes for participating students. 91% of GEAR UP Maine high school students surveyed during the 08-09 school year stated that they expected to attain a 2 or 4-year college degree. We attribute these aspirations to the various activities and supports provided to GEAR UP students, including: individualized learning plans, mentoring, tutoring, counseling, work exploration, college visits, and more. In addition, professional development is provided to school staff to ensure that students have access to a challenging and engaging curriculum. 72% of GEAR UP Maine 2009 graduates filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), indicating their intention to enroll in college this year, as compared with the state college-going rate of 55%.

For more information about GEAR UP Maine, please contact the Maine Support Network at (866) 291-0004. To learn more about the national GEAR UP program, please contact the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 or [www.edpartnerships.org](http://www.edpartnerships.org).

***About GEAR UP Maine:*** Maine's GEAR UP Program is helping to create a sustainable culture in schools that supports students who are economically disadvantaged in preparing for, accessing, and succeeding in postsecondary education.

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