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Education Foundation announces largest gift in its 30-year history

*“Transformative” \$4.8 million bequest will benefit students throughout
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District*

SANTA MONICA, CA, September 20, 2012 -- At tonight’s Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education meeting, Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation Executive Director Linda Greenberg Gross announced that the Foundation is the beneficiary of an estate gift of \$4.8 million, the largest gift in the organization’s 30-year history. The gift, from the estate of the late Peggy Bergmann, will be divided into two parts:

- \$2.4 million has been designated to establish an arts endowment for the purpose of providing semi-private music instruction, as well as the purchase and maintenance of musical instruments, for economically disadvantaged students throughout the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. The newly-created endowment will be known as the Peggy Bergmann Arts Endowment Fund, in memory of Lenore Bergmann and John Elmer Bergmann.
- \$2.4 million has been designated as current-use dollars to address SMMEF’s critical needs within the District. During the coming months, Superintendent Sandra Lyon will be working with the newly-formed Superintendent’s Advisory Council, made up of District, Foundation, and community leaders, to assess the District’s most critical needs in determining the best and most impactful use of these dollars.

“This is a truly transformative gift for the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation and our efforts to support every student at every school in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District,” said Greenberg Gross. “This gift will help us continue the great work that is already happening in our schools, and it will ensure that programs throughout our District can continue in these difficult economic times.”

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“We are so pleased to join with the Foundation to announce this magnificent gift that will have an enormous effect on our schools today and in perpetuity,” said Sandra Lyon, Superintendent of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. “As state funding for public education continues to decline, it’s never been more important that we seek support from our communities to ensure continued excellence in our schools. This is a tremendous step in that direction.”

The Bergmann bequest arrives at a time when the District is moving toward a centralized fundraising model in which the Education Foundation broadens its focus from events and annual appeals to major and planned gifts that will create sustainability for important programs at schools throughout the District. Cultivation of long-term relationships, such as the one that resulted in this gift, is now a core focus of the Foundation’s centralized fundraising efforts.

“Gifts like this one – those that impact students and schools District-wide – have to be our focus if we are to achieve equity in our District and give all students opportunities to succeed,” said Greenberg Gross.

Ms. Bergmann passed away on December 10, 2011. According to Bruce and Sonya Sultan, attorneys for the Estate of Peggy Bergmann and longtime supporters of the District and of the Education Foundation, Ms. Bergmann had learned of the District’s efforts to provide equity to all students through a centralized fundraising model, and she wanted to jump start that effort with this bequest.

“It was Ms. Bergmann’s hope that this gift would encourage others to give large and small gifts to the Education Foundation to make program equity a reality for all children in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District,” said Sonya Sultan, adding that the fact that Ms. Bergmann’s friend and executor was familiar with the fine reputation of Linda Greenberg Gross helped solidify Ms. Bergmann’s decision to benefit the Education Foundation.

About the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation

Established in 1982 in response to devastating federal and state education budget cuts, the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF) was organized by a dedicated group of parents, community leaders, and local business owners to enhance and supplement the curriculum of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. The Foundation’s mission is to ensure equity and access to a vibrant educational experience for all students. Dollars raised by the Foundation are distributed equitably throughout the entire District. The Foundation works hand-in-hand with the District to allocate funds in ways that result in the greatest impact. The Foundation supports programs in academics, the arts, and athletics throughout the 16-school Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.