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KnowledgeWorks Foundation Awards Fourth Annual Conlan Awards

Cincinnati - KnowledgeWorks Foundation has awarded the fourth annual Thomas L. Conlan Awards for Excellence in College Access. The awards were established by KnowledgeWorks Foundation in 2001 in honor of Thomas L. Conlan Sr. and the Conlan family for their outstanding contributions in the field of College Access. One is awarded to an outstanding local college access program and one to recognize an Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) Program Staff/Volunteer.

“The Conlan awards were developed to recognize excellence in local college access programs and the commitment of people to inspire more Ohio students to pursue postsecondary education, said Chad P. Wick,” president & CEO, KnowledgeWorks Foundation. “We are proud to recognize the following two recipients for their hard work and dedication this past year.”

The **Local College Access Program Award** is given to an OCAN-member local college access program for excellence, innovation and creativity in inspiring students to pursue postsecondary education. This year’s recipient is the Lima/Allen County College Access program. This program, in its second year of programming, is already working to implement innovative programs to serve students and families in the community. Through a partnership with the local YMCA, this college access program has opened a College Resource Center and is working to provide advisors from local colleges to assist individuals with financial aid, ACT preparation, colleges, scholarships and careers. This year they received a grant to work with a program to help pregnant and parenting teens learn about postsecondary resources and the program is continuing to raise funds to start an endowment for last-dollar scholarships. The Lima/Allen County College Access program will receive the award and a grant of \$1000 for its scholarship program or operating revenue.

The **OCAN Program Staff/Volunteer Award** recognizes the dedication, hard work and innovation of an individual working on behalf of an OCAN-member college access program. This year’s winner is Dr. Adrienne O’Neill from the Stark Education Partnership. Dr. O’Neill has been a constant advocate for college readiness for all at the local, state and national levels. In the past year, she has provided testimony to the Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy and the US House Appropriations Subcommittee on Health, Human Services, Education and Related Agencies on college access issues. Her commitment to local college access programs is demonstrated through her leadership and dedication toward raising student achievement. She has helped secure local grants to underwrite ACT Test Preparation courses and fee waivers in support of the postsecondary access advisory process, and also created a local scholarship website providing information about financial aid to students and families. Under Dr. O’Neil’s leadership, the Stark County college access program, through the Stark P-16 Compact has, in a short time, become a key component of a local partnership between the local business, educational, governmental and philanthropic community focusing creating a seamless system of

education focusing on the high achievement of all students. Dr. O'Neill receives the award and a \$1000 professional development stipend.

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Awards are made based on letters of nomination, program descriptions, biographies of nominees and two letters of support.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation is Ohio's largest public education philanthropy. KnowledgeWorks Foundation provides funding and leadership for education initiatives throughout the state and is focused on creating and improving educational opportunities. The Foundation is committed to sharing knowledge gained and lessons learned with others in Ohio and across the nation to help inform public policy. Learn more about KnowledgeWorks Foundation at <http://www.kwfdn.org/>.

The Ohio College Access Network was founded in 1999 to establish college access programs across the state. Currently, 36 college access programs serve over 145,000 students in nearly 300 of Ohio's 612 school districts, and 17 private parochial schools in more than 50 counties.