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**For Immediate Release**

**July 14, 2017**

**WHAT DOES A QUALITY SUMMER PROGRAM LOOK LIKE?**

**National Summer Learning Association Announces Winners**

**of the 2017 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award and Founder's Award**

*Superior Programs in Delaware, Texas, Minnesota, & California are Raising the Bar During Pivotal Months to Avoid the 'Summer Slide'*

**BALTIMORE, MD, JULY 14, 2017** – Four stellar programs from across the country that stand out in creating innovative, diverse, and experiential learning opportunities for students in all grade levels have been named winners of the prestigious 2017 New York Life Foundation Excellence In Summer Learning Award and Founder's Award. The awards are presented annually by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities.

Excellence Award winning programs strive to curb learning losses, particularly affecting low-income students who are disproportionately at risk for academically falling behind their higher-income peers during the summer. While most children lose up to two months of math skills during summer breaks, the cumulative effects of this "summer slide" are most detrimental to low-income students who lose another two to three months in reading skills.

Camp Good Sam, located across five cities in South Texas, is the winner of the 2017 Excellence in Summer Learning Award. Camp Good Sam supports educational achievement through an immersive experience built around a children's book series. Camp Good Sam's free camps offer literary-themed adventures spanning Harry Potter to Percy Jackson and the Caine Chronicles where campers hone critical skills while building a sense of belonging through a safe and enriching summer adventure.

The Third Annual Founder's Award recognizes unique and non-traditional summer program models, and the 2017 winners are:

- SummerCollab, based in Delaware, transforms educational outcomes for low-income students.
- Canoemobile, located in cities across America, engages youth in experiential outdoor learning.
- SummerBoost, a Save the Children National Model implemented across eight states, focuses on unforgettable summer experiences for children living in rural and impoverished communities.

"Summer programming and opportunities are now, more than ever, crucial for the well-being of our youth," said Matthew Boulay, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association. "Thanks to innovative programs like our award winners and finalists, kids are able to stay engaged over the summer months through fun and unique learning experiences designed to help students thrive in the school year ahead."

"We are proud to once again partner with the National Summer Learning Association to support the growth and visibility of top-quality summer learning programs. Each year we look forward to honoring outstanding summer programs that exemplify excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development," Marlyn Torres, Senior Program Officer, New York Life Foundation. "Every child deserves the opportunity to learn while staying safe and healthy during the summer months and these programs have demonstrated how important summers can make life-changing difference in the lives of young students."

Both annual awards recognize summer programs demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth, as measured by the Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment (SLPQA) -- an instrument designed jointly by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality and NSLA. Winning programs demonstrate exemplary practices in overall programming, including professional development for program staff and collaboration with community partners in fulfilling shared goals for student and family engagement.

The 2017 finalists included ArtForce in Indianapolis, Indiana; Camp Good Sam in San Antonio, Texas; Canoemobile in Minneapolis, Minnesota; GT STEAM Academy in Denver, Colorado; Link Summer Learning Program in Newark, New Jersey; Oakland Springboard Summer in Oakland, California; SummerBoost Camp in Yucca Valley, CA; SummerCollab in Wilmington, Delaware.

#### **Description of 2017 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award & Founder's Award Winners:**

- **Camp Good Sam:** A literature-based theme guides engaging activities that help youth build social skills, foster creativity and realize their potential. Camp Good Sam provides services to youth through several areas of focus: Supporting Educational Achievement, Exploring College and Career Pathways, Leadership Development and Civic Engagement.
- **SummerCollab:** Student choice, creativity and imagination drive this program model and keeps kids engaged through a rigorous curriculum and weekly challenges ranging from the Amazing Race to Space Travel. SummerCollab has seen 1 in 4 of their 1500 campers grow a year or more in phonics reading and 86 percent experienced learning loss reversal.
- **Canoemobile:** Fishing, canoeing...oh the joys of summer! Canoemobile brings classroom learning outside, fostering young environmental stewards and creating pathways to pursue educational and career opportunities in the outdoors. Led by Wilderness Inquiry, the Canoemobile is a collaboration of federal, state, and local partners connecting urban youth to

the natural world through hands-on, outdoor learning in cities across America. From San Francisco to the Bronx, communities welcome Canoemobile to serve thousands of youth on their local waterways.

- **SummerBoost Camp:** School's out and summer learning is fun for more than 1,300 students at Save the Children's SummerBoost Camp which aims to break the cycle of rural poverty. From LEGO Robotics to Under the Sea explorations and student-led community service projects, SummerBoostCamp boasts impressive results with 72 percent of regularly participating children showing improved math scores during their time at Summer Boost.

The National Summer Learning Association will honor this year's winners with a monetary donation to the program and recognition at Summer Changes Everything™, a national conference devoted entirely to summer learning and afterschool, at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix in Phoenix, Arizona from October 23-25, 2017.

#### **About the National Summer Learning Association**

*The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in summer learning, develops and delivers community capacity-building offerings and convenes and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)*

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