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Two San Diego-Area Educators Named As Nation's Most Innovative Education Leaders

Lemon Grove's Darryl LaGace and San Diego's Mary Catherine Swanson Receive 2005 Cable's Leaders in Learning Awards

**Media Note: Awardees are in Washington, DC through May 18
To arrange interviews or receive digital photographs, call contact**

Washington, DC –Darryl LaGace, Director of Information Systems for Lemon Grove School District, and Mary Catherine Swanson, founder of the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination), are being honored nationally for finding innovative ways to educate students and for making a substantial contribution to learning in the San Diego community.

Cox Communications San Diego, Time Warner Cable San Diego, and Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation, announced today that LaGace and Swanson are winners of the new *Cable's Leaders in Learning Award*, which recognizes the most inventive classroom educators, administrators, community leaders, and policymakers who are transforming education from Kindergarten through high school (K-12).

“To be selected as *Cable's Leaders in Learning Award* winners, these awardees demonstrated dedication to improving learning for all children,” said Helen Soulé, Ph.D., executive director of Cable in the Classroom. “They did this by reaching beyond the familiar to support and encourage young people to achieve their best. Armed with a high quality education, young people will be prepared to meet the world that awaits them – and to improve and transform it for their own children.”

- **LaGace** is being recognized in the Pushing the Envelope award category, for his use of technology to transform the teaching and learning environment in the Lemon Grove School district. Determined not to let economic challenges inhibit their capacity to meet the needs of the community, the city and the school district created LemonLINK, which focuses on high-speed connectivity via Cox Communications, equity, and access to resources. The result of business and government partnerships created to connect all schools and the city via microwave, laser, and fiber-optic technologies, LemonLINK has turned the school district into the communication hub for the entire community. Unique to this system is the use of a microwave tower, located at the district office. Each school and

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city facility (City Hall, Fire Department, Public Works, Recreation Department, Community Center, Teen Center, and Senior Center) has its own microwave, laser, and/or fiber-optic link and can access the Internet and any programs needed from workstations anywhere on the citywide area network. Every family now has equitable access to information technology, just as families in more affluent areas do.

- **Swanson** won in the General Excellence award category, for creating AVID, a school-wide program that prepares the least served students for college eligibility and success by raising rigorous standards and providing support. Most AVID students are underrepresented minorities – African Americans and Latinos. Since 1980, Swanson’s system has been improving school-wide standardized test scores, encouraging challenging course selection, and increasing the number of students accepted to college. The program places students in honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate courses, then provides them the support tools to succeed. Since 1990, more than 30,000 AVID students have graduated from high school and gone on to college. Nearly 95 percent of AVID students enroll in college.

LaGace, Swanson, and the other *Leaders in Learning Award* winners are in Washington, D.C. this week to attend a gala awards ceremony, to meet with Members of Congress and education leaders, and to participate in a series of professional development events. Awardees receive a cash prize from Cable in the Classroom, in addition to the trip to Washington.

The awards ceremony, hosted by Bill Kurtis, host of A&E’s *American Justice* and producer of *Investigative Reports* and *Cold Case Files*, will take place on May 17 at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer will interview award-winners during the awards presentations. Marc Summers, host of *Unwrapped* on the Food Network, John Anderson, an ESPN *Sportscenter* anchor, and Jeff Johnson, host of the BET documentary series *The Cousin Jeff Chronicles*, will present the awards. Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives J. Dennis Hastert will receive a tribute from the cable industry. Rising stand-up comedian Ted Alexandro will be performing a ten-minute routine.

“We hope that these awards, and the exceptional work on behalf of learning they honor, will move others to strive for similar excellence and stretch the boundaries of the kind of excellence that is possible in education,” said Soulé. “We at Cable in the Classroom will always have that – and these awardees – close to the heart of our mission.”

The awards fall into four categories:

- **General Excellence** – Awards given for general excellence in education.
- **Pushing the Envelope** – Awards given to those redefining the education frontier by using cable content or cable technology.
- **Policymaker** – Awards given to federal, state, or local policymakers who have contributed to the improvement of K-12 education in the broadest sense;
- **Media literacy** – An award given in partnership with the National PTA to recognize excellence in advancing media literacy skills.

For more information about *Cable's Leaders in Learning Awards*, please visit www.ciconline.org or www.leadersinlearningawards.org.