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Ithaca Educational Program Director Chris Sperry Named One of Nation's Most Innovative Education Leaders

Project Look Sharp Co-Creator Receives 2005 Cable's Leaders in Learning Award

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

Washington, DC – For developing a unique approach and materials (with his co-director Cyndy Scheibe) to help educators integrate media literacy throughout the core curriculum, Chris Sperry is being honored nationally for his substantial contributions to learning in Ithaca.

Time Warner Cable - Syracuse and Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation, announced today that Sperry is a winner 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."

Sperry is being recognized in the Media Literacy award category, given in partnership with the National PTA, for creating Project Look Sharp, an approach to media literacy inspired by teachers' needs and ideas. With Ithaca College faculty member Cyndy Scheibe, Sperry has co-directed Project Look Sharp for eight years, designing, developing, and disseminating engaging multimedia educational materials teachers desperately want to teach core content and engage students in complex critical thinking. "Few teachers have time to find the right media literacy materials, to get them in a usable form, to research the appropriate background information, and to put everything together in time for the next class. PLS has taken on this challenge," Sperry said. Arranged as curriculum kits, the materials cover such topics as "Media Construction of War: A Critical Reading of History," which includes comparisons of *Newsweek* covers from the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, among other activities. The kits are distributed nationally and are being used by hundreds of teachers.

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“Media literacy is an essential skill for the 21st century,” said Sperry. “Teachers much have the materials and training to integrate it into the core curriculum.”

Sperry 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. Up and coming stand-up comedian Ted Alexandro will perform 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.