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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**COOKE CENTER AWARDED MAJOR CHALLENGE GRANT FOR CHILDREN  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The Kresge Foundation's \$750,000 award to support inclusive special education  
in NYC and beyond

September 4, 2008 (New York, NY) – The Cooke Center for Learning and Development, New York City's largest private provider of inclusive special education, is pleased to announce a major grant award that will benefit children with special needs everywhere.

The Kresge Foundation — a highly regarded national foundation that supports communities by strengthening non-profits and schools — has awarded a \$750,000 challenge grant to the Cooke Center in support of its Road to Independence Campaign. The \$10 million campaign funds the renovation of Cooke's high school, supports Cooke's commitment to diversity and contributes to the advancement of inclusive special education throughout the five boroughs and beyond.

Kresge officials said they were impressed with Cooke's unique dedication to serving all children who can benefit from its programs, regardless of their financial circumstances. "Key to our decision was the school's commitment to serving students from low- and moderate-income families in some of New York City's most diverse neighborhoods," wrote Kresge President and CEO, Rip Rapson in his June award letter.

The generous award ups the stakes in the fundraising campaign. Cooke has raised \$7.8 million to date; the Kresge grant is contingent on Cooke raising the balance of funds needed to meet its goal.

To that end, Cooke will embark on a focused "mini-campaign," drawing not only on its parents and longtime supporters, but also cultivating new individual and corporate donors who can help sustain Cooke's vision.

“Now more than ever, Cooke needs the support of everyone who wants to see children with special needs determine their own futures,” said Cooke President Dr. Michael Termini. “We must raise the funds we need to meet Kresge’s challenge. Our kids are counting on us.”

Cooke serves students whose needs are not being met in existing programs or public schools. Students come to the school with a range of cognitive delays, developmental disorders and physical disabilities. Most have significant communication deficits.

The Road to Independence Campaign supports three high-priority initiatives: The **High School Initiative** funds renovations, equipment and technology at the Cooke Center Academy in Greenwich Village, a model high school that combines academics with independent living and employment skills.

The Campaign’s **Fund for Diversity** allows Cooke to maintain its unique commitment to a needs-blind admissions policy and accept every student who can benefit from its programs, regardless of the family’s ability to pay. These policies help to create a diverse socio-economic student body — one of Cooke’s great strengths.

The **Fund for the Advancement of Inclusive Education** supports Cooke’s efforts to foster best practices in inclusive special education, both internally and in the greater education community. By providing professional development and consultation to schools throughout the city, Cooke helps to ensure that all children with special needs are educated among their peers.

About Cooke:

The Cooke Center for Learning and Development is the largest private provider of inclusive special education services in New York City. Partnering with more than 70 schools and community organizations, Cooke offers preschool programs, a K-12 school and consulting services that support inclusive learning environments.