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**For Immediate Release**

**Hmong Youth Honored at the Governor's Mansion**

MINNEAPOLIS – September 9, 2009 – Nineteen youth from the YWCA of Minneapolis Girls & Youth programs will be honored today with a Red Wagon Award at the Minnesota Governor's Mansion. This award recognizes youth in Minnesota for increased academic achievement, civic engagement & service, and exemplary leadership. The youth being honored are part of the Minneapolis Hmong community and are senior members of the YWCA's Asian Life Lessons Teaching Helping Advocating Team (ALL THAT). These high school students volunteered for a school year or summer to help younger Hmong youth with learning the language, social and study skills that will help them succeed in school.

"Our goal is to increase school success for immigrant and first-generation Hmong youth," says Gwen Wilson, YWCA Director of Girls & Youth Programs. "Hmong youth volunteers are important because they understand what younger students experience. They have overcome language and cultural barriers to succeed in school and show younger students that they can be successful too."

Vee, a youth volunteer and student at Patrick Henry High School, expressed hopes that his efforts would support other students as they get ready for high school. "When you enter high school everything changes. But because they know what we've been through, maybe they won't get nervous." Tser, a freshman in the automotive program at Roosevelt High School, does math homework with students. "Students get a lot of homework in middle school and I'm good at math. I like working with kids, talking to them and making friends."

Volunteer mentors attended school at Patrick Henry and Roosevelt High Schools where they took part in International Baccalaureate, Open Program, Engineering and Automotive magnets. All of them plan on going to college, and their ambitions range from football to engineering. Kinley Vang, YWCA Program Coordinator reports, "Many youth in ALL THAT have experienced truancy issues and others enter the program with low grades or low expectations. Now these young volunteers are getting good grades, succeeding in school and planning for college. And they are helping younger youth stay in school and get ready for college too."

**About the YWCA of Minneapolis**

The YWCA of Minneapolis is a nonprofit organization striving to empower women and girls, and eliminate racism. The YWCA of Minneapolis has been empowering women and girls since 1891. YWCA Girls & Youth programs serve 1,500 youth a year and provide after school programs in 20 Minneapolis Public Schools.

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