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**Ashoka and Staples Announce First Four Winners of Annual Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition**

*Four Young Entrepreneurs Addressing Social Issues Have Been Selected for Global Competition*

**ARLINGTON, Va. — Sept. 8, 2010**— [Ashoka](#), the world's community of leading social entrepreneurs, and [Staples](#), Inc. (NASDAQ: SPLS), announced today the first four winners out of eight in the annual [Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition](#). The global competition highlights youth-led innovations addressing social issues affecting their communities, and is part of Ashoka's [Youth Venture](#)<sup>®</sup>, an initiative that fosters young entrepreneurs all over the world to become changemakers who are creating positive change. Since 2006, [Staples Foundation for Learning](#), the charitable arm of Staples, Inc., has enabled Youth Venture to expand to eight countries in North America, South America and Europe through more than \$2.5 million in funding.

Staples and Ashoka understand the value that changemakers bring to anything they do and are heavily invested in helping more people become changemakers. They are critical to the success of any organization, company or community, and together they form a powerful force for improving lives.

“Our Staples/Ashoka Competition winners, sourced from hundreds of entries so far spanning 44 countries, are demonstrating just how much any one person can do to make a mark in the world,” said Gretchen Zucker, Executive Director of Ashoka's Youth Venture. “But the most important contribution we can make is to help everyone around us become changemakers.”

The Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition will recognize a total of eight winners. The four winners selected to date include:

- Rebecca Kantar is a founding member of Minga, a youth-run civic organization dedicated to ending the global child sex trade through educating teens worldwide. Rebecca serves as Minga's Director of Film Media and is a highly accomplished public speaker. She has been named as one of *TIME Magazine's* Tomorrow25 and will be attending Harvard University as a freshman in September.
- Mohammed Barry, of the Republic of the Gambia, has a truly inspiring story of leadership and perseverance. Mohammed lost his father and contracted HIV at age 7 and faced enormous social stigma and discrimination in his community. He is the founder of Aid for Smiles, a coalition of global social activists who work toward empowering and mainstreaming marginalized and socially disadvantaged young people. He also leads Speak AIDS, a campaign that confronts the

misunderstanding and stigma associated with HIV-positive youth. Mohammed was recently nominated for the World Children Peace Prize.

- Shiv Dravid is the founder and creator of The Viewpaper, a youth journalism website for young people in India. Shiv was inspired to take action when he realized that his own daily experiences were quite different from the observations and discussions amongst media elites. The Viewpaper is seen by more than 150,000 readers a month and publishes daily articles written by youth staff writers. Over the last three years they have engaged close to 4,000 young people in sharing their views and opinions and have emerged as India's largest youth paper. Shiv has ambitious plans to scale his work and hopes to branch out to 50 sites within the next year.
- Ben Lyon was inspired to create FrontLineSMS:Credit while studying abroad in in countries including Uganda and East Timor. During his travels, Ben witnessed how communities and families in these countries were devastated by natural disasters like hurricanes and how soldiers did not receive the support they needed when returning home from war. Today, Ben is pioneering technology that is connecting microfinance institutions to their borrowers via cell phones in Sierra Leone. Ben is using his knowledge in economics and international studies to make a positive impact on these people and their communities. Ben has been selected an “Unreasonable Fellow” by the Unreasonable Institute, which attracts up to 25 high-impact, young social entrepreneurs from across the globe for a ten week conference.

The [Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition](#) will recognize a total of eight winners who will receive cash awards, consulting from Staples executives and an all-expenses-paid trip to speak at TEDxYSE, a Youth Venture-hosted conference which will be held at the Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC on Nov. 13. TEDxYSE leverages the global TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference model of thought leaders, which enables local community groups to organize, design and host their own independent, TED-like events. Actor James Cromwell will be opening the event with a short speech on youth social entrepreneurship. For more information, please visit <http://www.tedxyse.com>. Tickets for the event will go on sale today and are available at <http://www.tedxyse.com/register>

“Together, Staples and Ashoka are providing young entrepreneurs with a chance to show how their Ventures are creating a positive, lasting impact in communities all around the world,” said Paul Capelli, vice president of community and public relations, Staples. Inc. “These first four finalists bring unique approaches to effecting social change, and serve as motivators to inspire young people to initiate and lead their own social change.”

The competition is open to existing and new Youth Venture teams, which are made up of young people between the ages of 12 and 24, who are creating entrepreneurial ventures that make a positive impact on communities. Nominations and entries will be accepted on a rolling basis through Sept. 30, 2010. For additional information on the Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition, please visit the competition web site at: <http://www.genv.net/en-us/staples-yse>.

### **About Youth Venture**

Ashoka’s Youth Venture aims to help an entire generation of young people develop as changemakers, who will improve their communities now and throughout their lives. Youth Venture inspires and supports teams of young people to launch and lead their own civic-minded organizations and businesses. Youth Venture was created by Ashoka, the global pioneer of the social entrepreneurship sector and the world’s biggest network of changemakers. We believe that the greatest contribution we can make to the world is to increase dramatically the number of changemakers today and in every future generation. This is the key factor for success for every part of society, from a school to a company to an entire country. Ashoka’s Youth Venture operates in 18 countries and engages 75,000 young people. [www.GenV.net](http://www.GenV.net).

### **About Ashoka**

Ashoka is the world’s community of leading social entrepreneurs—individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of

innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org).

### **About Staples**

Staples, the world's largest [office products](#) company, is committed to making it easy for customers to buy a wide range of office products and services. Our broad selection of [office supplies](#), [electronics](#), [technology](#) and [office furniture](#) as well as business services, including [computer repair](#) and [copying](#) and [printing](#), helps our customers run their offices efficiently. With 2009 sales of \$24 billion and 91,000 associates worldwide, Staples operates in 26 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia serving businesses of all sizes and consumers. Staples invented the [office superstore](#) concept in 1986 and today ranks second worldwide in e-commerce sales. The company is headquartered outside Boston. More information about Staples (Nasdaq: SPLS) is available at [www.staples.com/media](http://www.staples.com/media).

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