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Ashoka and Staples Announce Eight Winners of Annual Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition

Actor James Cromwell Joins Young Entrepreneurs to Address Social Issues at TEDxYSE in DC

ARLINGTON, Va. — Oct. 18, 2010— [Ashoka](#), the world's community of leading social entrepreneurs, and [Staples, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: SPLS), announced today the eight winners of 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](#)[®], an initiative that fosters young entrepreneurs all over the world to become changemakers committed to creating positive change.

All eight winners of the Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition will receive cash prizes, consulting from Staples executives and an all-expenses-paid trip to speak at TEDxYSE, a Youth Venture-hosted conference held at Sidwell Friends in Washington, DC on Nov. 13. TEDxYSE leverages the global TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference model, which enables local community groups to organize, design and host their own independent, TED-like events. Actor [James Cromwell](#), Academy Award nominee and supporter of social change, will be the opening speaker at the event. Tickets for the event are available at <http://www.tedxyse.com/register>.

“The Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition winners demonstrate the impact one person can make in the world,” said Gretchen Zucker, executive director of Ashoka's Youth Venture. “The most important contribution we can make is to help everyone around us become changemakers.”

The Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition received more than 500 entries across 52 countries. The top issues addressed by the entrants relate to education, the environment and youth leadership. The grand-prize winner will be selected by Staples associates globally, and announced at the TEDxYSE event on November 13 in Washington, DC.

Competition winners include:

- **Mohammed Barry**, 19, 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 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. Mohammed was recently nominated for the World Children Peace Prize.

- **Shiv Dravid**, 24, 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.
- **Rocco Falconer**, 22, is the founder of Planting Promises, a community-based organization in Sierra Leone that develops the prospects of the world's poorest country by giving local people the opportunity to create sustainable business and pursue their education.
- **Rebecca Kantar**, 18, 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 is now a freshman at Harvard University.
- **Ben Lyon**, 24, was inspired to create FrontLineSMS:Credit which is pioneering technology that is connecting microfinance institutions to their borrowers via cell phones in Sierra Leone. Ben has been selected as 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.
- **Lamia Oezal**, 21, founded DeKische Generation, an organization that focuses on improving the integration of Turkish youth in Germany after witnessing misperceptions and experiencing discrimination of her Turkish heritage in Germany.
- **Seaon Shin**, a 19-year-old Korean-American living in Dubai, has founded the Global Youth Empowering Movement, which links youth together globally to collaborate on service projects for the betterment of humanity.
- **Heather Wilder**, 17, a Las Vegas teen working as an advocate for the rights of children in foster care, through her organization, Fostering Kids at Work. As a foster kid who suffered abuse before being adopted into a loving home at age 12, Heather writes a series of booklets that address issues faced by foster children.

"We recognize and celebrate the winners of this year's Staples/Ashoka Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition for their leadership and passion for community service," said Paul Capelli, vice president of community and public relations for Staples, Inc. "These young leaders serve as an inspiration to youth everywhere and encourage them to become leaders of their own social change."

Since 2006, [Staples Foundation for Learning](http://www.genv.net/en-us/staples-yse), 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. 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.

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.

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.

Follow Staples on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/staplestweets> and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/staples>.

About TED

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. Started as a four-day conference in California 25 years ago, TED has grown to support those world-changing ideas with multiple initiatives. The annual TED Conference invites the world's leading thinkers and doers to speak for 18 minutes. Their talks are then made available, free, at TED.com. TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Al Gore, Jane Goodall, Elizabeth Gilbert, Sir Richard Branson, Nandan Nilekani, Philippe Starck, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Isabel Allende and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The annual TED Conference takes place in Long Beach, California, with simulcast in Palm Springs; TEDGlobal is held each year in Oxford, UK. TED's media initiatives include TED.com, where new TEDTalks are posted daily, and the Open Translation Project, which provides subtitles and interactive transcripts as well as the ability for any TEDTalk to be translated by volunteers worldwide. TED has established the annual TED Prize, where exceptional individuals with a wish to change the world are given the opportunity to put their wishes into action; TEDx, which offers individuals or groups a way to host local, self-organized events around the world; and the TEDFellows program, helping world-changing innovators from around the globe to become part of the TED community and, with its help, amplify the impact of their remarkable projects and activities.

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