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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, April 30, 2013

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11th ANNUAL NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOLS DAY

Across the Country Events Focus on the Importance of Healthy School Environments; Healthy Schools Network Releases New Memo on Environmentally Preferable Purchasing - "Green Purchasing"

(Albany, NY) Today marks the 11th annual *National Healthy Schools Day*, a growing national movement that works to improve schools' indoor air quality as it adversely impacts women and children. School environments play an important role in the health and academic success of children. Each school day, 55 million children and 7 million adults — 20 percent of the total U.S. population and 98 percent of all children—spend their days inside school buildings.

Unfortunately, too many of our nation's 130,000 public and private schools are "unhealthy" buildings that can harm their health and hinder learning. Unhealthy school environments can affect attendance, concentration and performance, as well as lead to costly, time-consuming cleanup and remediation activities for schools. This year, in partnership with the US Environmental Protection Agency, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and two dozen cosponsoring groups, the Network coordinated more than 50 *National Healthy School Day* activities around the country.

The Healthy Schools Network also released the new "*Healthy Purchasing for Healthy Schools: A Guidance Memo Green Cleaning + Five More Product Categories to Help Make Schools Healthier.*" Environmentally Preferable Purchasing ("EPP," aka, "green purchasing") promotes the purchase of products, services and equipment that have reduced impacts on health and the environment compared to equivalent products, services and equipment. Healthy Schools Network commissioned this customizable guidance memo to help schools, organizations, and education policy makers make smart decisions to reduce the presence of toxic chemicals in schools. The goals are always to have more children achieve their full potential and miss fewer schools days, and to have school administrators reduce risks to health and stay on budget.

"We hope Coalition members and others will use this document to start a dialogue about these issues." **John D. Shaw, President of the Healthy Schools Network Board of Directors** stated, "Investment in protecting our children's health in schools today pays double dividends in healthcare affordability tomorrow: they will be healthier and need less healthcare themselves, and by learning more and earning more will be better able to afford healthcare costs of their parents - us."

Additionally, the Healthy Schools Network announced its National Healthy Schools Hero Awards for spring 2013 to three outstanding leaders for efforts to reduce hazardous chemicals in materials and

products purchased by schools and to advance children's environmental health protections. The three and excerpts from their citations are:

- **John McKinney, Connecticut State Senator:** During more than a decade of leadership in Connecticut he has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring that every Connecticut child receives a quality education and he understands this is not possible without healthy indoor air quality in our schools. McKinney commissioned an important study of Connecticut schools then has championed and won key legislative reforms over many years.
- **Bill Walsh, Founder and Executive Director, Healthy Building Network:** For more than 13 years he has led cutting edge research, tool development, technical assistance, and advocacy to advance healthier and safer building materials, focused on eliminating bio-accumulative toxics, and a whole life-cycle approach that prevents harm to the planet and to people. Campaigns include arsenic-treated wood, Polyvinyl chloride plastic (PVC). He also led development of The Pharos Project, a tool for evaluating building materials.
- **Arthur B. Weissman, PhD, President and CEO, Green Seal, Inc.:** For over thirty years he has been an active force in the greening of the marketplace. As President and CEO of Green Seal since 1996, he has led the non-profit organization's resurgence as a key driver for making the economy more sustainable. Recently Green Seal established a schools web portal to make it easier for schools to locate certified green products.

"We know that toxic and or allergen-ridden indoor air environments are making our children and teachers sick and impairing their ability to succeed in the classroom," **said Claire Barnett, Executive Director of the Healthy Schools Network** said. "When you take in the missed work days and the health costs and the moms who are teachers staying home with their kids who are sick, that's a double and triple whammy on our economy and educational system we can't afford."

Federal Initiatives: This year, in recognition of the importance of a healthy school environment, the EPA awarded nearly \$750,000 in "capacity building" grants to five states -- Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Ohio and Wisconsin. These grants will be used to help states implement comprehensive K-12 school environmental health programs using the new *Voluntary Guidelines for States: Development and Implementation of a School Environmental Health Program*. For more information, [visit their website](#).

A wide array of federal officials and national and state organizations representing tens of millions of Americans have endorsed National Healthy Schools Day, including Acting U.S. EPA Administrator Bob Perciasepe, US Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and Dr. Robin Ikeda, Acting Director, National Center for Environmental Health and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control.

Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives also offered their support, including: U.S. Senator Boxer (D-CA), Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Representative George Miller (D-CA), Senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, and Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), Senior Democrat on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Other supporters include: the American Public Health Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Association of School Business Officials, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the American Federation of Teachers, the American Public Health Association, , the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Education Association,

the National Environment Health Association, the National Parent Teacher Association and more. See supporting statements in the online Media Kit linked below.

For more information about school environments and more, visit:

www.nationalhealthyschoolsday.org/media_kit.html

Take a look at the 2013 activities map here: <http://bit.ly/YjueA8>

Healthy Schools Network, Inc. is the leading national voice for children's environmental health at school and a national-award-winning 501(c) 3 not-for-profit environmental health organization. Founded in 1995, it launched the national healthy schools movement with comprehensive state policies and a model coalition that have been shared and replicated widely since 1997. Each year, in cooperation with the EPA, the Network coordinates National Healthy School Day's events and outreach.

www.HealthySchools.org.

Coalition for Healthier Schools is a 1,000-member strong national coalition, providing “the platform and the forum for environmental health in schools”, coordinated by Healthy Schools Network. The Coalition, working collaboratively, secured federal funds and laws to improve children’s health and school environments.