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Reporters May Contact:

Josh Gitelson, 781-455-8250
RFBinder Partners (on behalf of Bank of America)
josh.gitelson@rfbinder.com

Kimberly Zipp, 206-358-7695
Kimberly.zipp@bankofamerica.com

Bank of America Celebrates Seattle Area Community Leaders with \$450,000 in Neighborhood Excellence Initiative Awards

*Innovative Program Encourages Local Not-for-Profits, Individuals and High School Students
Who Are Working to Reshape and Improve Seattle Area Neighborhoods*

SEATTLE, WA – Bank of America today announced the recipients of its 2nd annual *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* (NEI) awards – twelve individuals and organizations committed to building and strengthening the Seattle community.

The *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* was established in 2004 to underscore Bank of America's commitment to the local communities in which it does business nationwide. The bank has committed more than \$30 million to the two-year program, which recognizes, nurtures and rewards organizations, local heroes and student leaders in 38 of the bank's major markets across the country. Bank of America is currently the largest consumer bank operating in the United States – serving more markets than any other institution.

"Bank of America's Neighborhood Excellence Initiative was created to honor organizations and individuals who are true champions of the cities and towns in which we live and work," explained Marie Gunn, president, Bank of America, Washington. "Our Neighborhood Builder winners, El Centro de la Raza and Child Care Resources, have shown extraordinary leadership and innovation in addressing the critical issues of K-12 education, workforce development and community development and revitalization in Seattle. Our community has benefited tremendously from the selfless efforts put forth by this year's NEI Local Heroes and Student Leaders. We hope Bank of America's support for these efforts will enable these organizations and individuals we honor today to achieve even further success."

Neighborhood Builders

Two Seattle non-profit organizations were granted this year's Bank of America Neighborhood Builders awards for their contribution to the community and commitment to improving neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Builders program provides \$200,000 in grant funding and leadership training over two years to two neighborhood non-profit organizations working to promote vibrant neighborhoods. The combination of operating support and leadership training helps strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of the selected organizations and promotes the professional development of their leaders. The Bank of America Neighborhood Builders for 2005 are:

- **Child Care Resources** addresses the lack of quality, affordable child care in King County. The organization leads efforts to promote equity for children, community stability and school readiness by helping families access and choose high quality child and after school care, and advocating for child care solutions that strengthen communities. The NEI grant will support a variety of activities to strengthen Child Care Resources' Careers Program, which trains low-income and immigrant/refugee women in child care careers.
- **El Centro de la Raza** seeks to raise the awareness level of the general public, politicians, business and civic leaders toward the needs of the Chicano/Latino community in the United States and to help the Chicano/Latino community in the Seattle/King County area empower itself. With the NEI grant, the organization will be able to continue and perhaps expand its Homeownership and Financial Literacy program.

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Local Heroes

Bank of America honored the contributions of five local leaders, celebrating them as role models and encouraging others to serve and make a difference in the Seattle community. These Local Heroes have shown leadership in solving local issues and significantly contributed to neighborhood vitality. Under the program, each recipient directs a \$5,000 contribution to an eligible non-profit of his or her choice. The Local Heroes, along with their selected non-profit organizations, are:

- **Laura Capestany** is a member of the board of directors at Habitat for Humanity of East King County, and she created and directs a multi faith, multi cultural Habitat project called the Together We Build Coalition. (Habitat for Humanity of East King County)
- **Nancy Ferguson** has worked for nearly two decades as a volunteer in jails, prisons, youth detention centers, alternative high schools and the Everett Community Justice Center in Western Washington, helping people become strong, productive citizens in the Northwest. She is also a member of a Community Accountability Board working for safer communities. (Fresh Start Ministries)
- **Betsy Lieberman** is executive director of AIDS Housing of Washington, bringing together planners, providers and funders to create housing for homeless individuals with mental illness, substance abuse disorders and AIDS. (AIDS Housing of Washington)
- **Therese Quinn** created the Woman to Woman Project in response to 9/11. Each month since then, she has connected recently immigrated women with women from various ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds for conversation and cross-cultural events, to break down stereotypes, create friendships, and improve communication. Therese also volunteers with the Everett Mayor's Advisory, Snohomish County Community Action, YMCA Multicultural Fair, Peace Village, Girls to Grandmothers and Lake Stevens Rotary. (Interfaith Association of Snohomish County)
- **Tess Thomas** has been a foster parent for 13 years, during which time she has had 75 children in her care. She serves as a board member of Treehouse, a Seattle-based organization providing enrichment and education programs to King County foster children. She also serves the Foster Parent Association of Washington State and the Advisory Committee of Children, Youth and Family Services. (Treehouse)

Student Leaders

Bank of America NEI grants additionally support the development of the next generation of neighborhood leaders, recognizing five outstanding student role models who serve the Seattle area. Student Leaders are high school students entering their junior or senior years who are exemplary young people with an interest in improving their neighborhoods. To further their personal and educational growth, each student will participate in an eight-week paid internship with a community-based organization, as well as a mentorship program with a Bank of America executive. Student Leader awardees for Seattle are:

- **Nate Benjamin** (Lakeside)
- **Ann Jackson** (Todd Beamer High School)
- **Ginny Lamb** (Seattle Academy)
- **Ryan Schindler** (Hazen High School)
- **Nicholas Sloan** (Cedar Park Christian High School)

The Bank of America *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative*

The Bank of America *Neighborhood Excellence Initiative* was developed to promote neighborhood excellence by identifying and then addressing local priorities for each community. This focus helps Bank of America meet the most pressing needs of each neighborhood by providing operating support and capacity building for nonprofit organizations, recognition for local leaders, and opportunities for young people who are addressing these issues in their communities.

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A local selection committee comprised of key members of the Seattle community assisted in the selection of these organizations and individuals. Committee members included:

- **Martha Choe**, director of Global Libraries, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Ralph Ibarra**, president, Marketeer Unlimited
- **Gaelynn McGavick**, community volunteer
- **Paul Shoemaker**, director, Social Venture Partners

Bank of America Charitable Investments

With a \$1.5 billion philanthropic goal over the next 10 years, Bank of America Charitable Investments is one of the largest corporate charitable organizations in the country. The mission of Bank of America Charitable Investments group is to deploy a targeted array of philanthropic resources that help neighborhoods grow and prosper, thereby creating thriving environments where the bank's customers, associates and shareholders live, work and invest. For more information about Bank of America Charitable Investments, please visit the Foundation's website at www.bankofamerica.com/foundation.

Bank of America

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