

For Immediate Release

Date: April 25, 2005

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Helping Teens Plan for the Future: New Web Site, The Youthhood, Launched

Minneapolis, MN – The Youthhood is a free, interactive, and dynamic new Web site that young adults and their teachers, parents, and mentors can use to plan for life after high school.

Grounded in the principals of universal design, the site addresses the future planning needs of all youth. Youthhood was launched April 11 by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the University of Minnesota.

The concept of Youthhood, as well as its content and activities, is based on current research in positive youth development and transition planning and their impact on post-high school success. Youthhood puts research into practice through a unique and extensive blend of content, interactive activities, links to related Web sites, and planning tools that tie youths' future goals to their current academic work. In addition, the site provides a progressive learning experience in that the further a specific topic is explored, the more activities that are tried and planning that is done, the more youth will learn and be able to apply the information to their own lives.

Youthhood has been designed using the metaphor of a neighborhood, with content areas depicted through virtual "locations" that youth can visit. These include The Hangout, The High School, The Job Center, The Government Center, The Health Clinic, The Community Center,

and The Apartment. Each content area includes corresponding interactive activities that build upon the users' new knowledge.

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Activities can be saved to the Web site's database for future use by each student user. Each content area also includes links to related Web sites, and adults using the site with youth (such as teachers, parents, and mentors) are provided with an additional list of related Web sites to share with students as needed.

Youthhood also provides several unique features. The site contains a virtual Private Journal where students can write and reflect upon what they've been learning. Each student user of the site also has a virtual Class Notebook where they can complete assignments related to what they're learning on the site. Teachers can read student responses and provide feedback and/or grades. Finally, Youthhood offers a tool called the Life Map to help students develop and implement goals to prepare for life after high school. Students can identify goals related to what they're learning, list steps to achieve these goals, identify organizations and individuals that can help, and check off the goal when they've accomplished it. The Life Map parallels the special

education Individualized Education Program (IEP) document, so that teachers working with youth with disabilities can transfer Life Map goals directly onto the more formal IEP.

Youthhood is a project of the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), which is funded by a five-year, \$9.5 million grant from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. FFI on Youthhood contact Pam Stenhjem at (612) 625-3863 or huntx010@umn.edu.

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