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NFTE NAMES 2012 LOCALLY GROWN ENTREPRENEURS
Six Business Owners Saluted for Building Companies and Giving Back

WASHINGTON, DC – February 21, 2012 – Six area business owners were named today as the 2012 Locally Grown Honorees by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) Greater Washington Region. The winners are being recognized for building companies in the Washington region and making significant contributions to their individual communities. This year's Honoree roster includes:

- ***Jim Bognet, President of Bognet Construction Associates***
Bognet grew up watching his father turn a small Pennsylvania plumbing business into a successful general contracting business. Through this, he learned the level of effort, financial management, and creativity required to start his own business. Bognet Construction has twice been voted a Top 50 Fastest Growing Company by the Washington Business Journal and is listed as a Top 25 Interior Construction firm, within three years of starting the company. With 70 employees, Bognet completed over \$80M in construction projects in 2011. He is also involved in a myriad of professional affiliations in Washington and Virginia.
- ***Cynthia Castillo, President & CEO of CSSI, Inc.***
Castillo never planned on being a successful entrepreneur. When she left California for Washington to handle her father's affairs after his untimely death, she planned to close his young company. But something greater – a sense of purpose and duty to her dad and the company's hard-working employees – drove her to stay. In the 20 years since, she has grown CSSI from a 10-person small business to a company with more than \$70 million in annual revenue and several locations on the East Coast. She is a champion of professional and personal growth and serves on numerous boards and as a mentor in many organizations.
- ***Peter Corbett, CEO of iStrategyLabs***
Corbett has spent most of his life proving people wrong. After building a very profitable concert production and promotion company while in college, people began to take notice. He has since created a multi-million dollar business that has doubled every year for the past three years and tripled headcount in just the last year alone. One of his most marked achievements is the creation of the 10,000 plus person DCWEEK festival. His vision of matching up designers, developers, entrepreneurs, and innovators has stimulated the region's growing ecosystem in ways that were never before attempted or even imagined.
- ***Heidi Kallett, CEO of The Dandelion Patch***
Kallett runs The Dandelion Patch, the 18 year-old fine stationery and gift boutiques in Northern Virginia. Her first job was working in her father's grocery stores – having done everything from pushing carts and bagging groceries, to being a cashier and sweeping the floors. This year, her stores are expected to hit \$5 million in revenue, employ almost 50 people, and grow from four

locations to six – all in a down economy. She is a prior Woman Who Means Business, A Smart CEO Brava Award winner, and a Woman of Vision honoree from the Junior League of Northern Virginia. Her latest venture, the Washington Retail Roundtable, is a forum for independent retailers in the region to share best practices, learn from the industry's best and brightest, and support each other in growing more profitable businesses. In June, Kallett will also become President for the Greater DC National Association of Women Business Owners.

- ***Davon Kelly, CEO of Novad Consulting***

A native of the Washington area, Kelly took NOVAD Management Consulting from a one-man shop in 2003 to a \$10 Million company that now employs 14 people. The company's success is based on his mission of continually exceeding expectations, providing viable solutions, and integrating that solution into the client's core business. Kelly is as committed to serving the community as he is to management consulting and spends considerable time speaking at area schools, volunteering as a basketball coach, and mentoring students. His recent awards include Top 100 Maryland Minority Business Enterprise Owner, Washington Business Journal's Minority Business Leader Award, and a SmartCEO Magazine Future 50 Business Award.

- ***Tien Wong, CEO of Lore Systems***

Wong started working in his father's Chinese restaurants in New Jersey when he was just 11. This is where he learned about customer service and hard work. After starting six businesses by his mid-20s, he cofounded and served as CEO of CyberRep, a Tysons Corner-based customer relationship management company. He grew the company to \$80 million in revenue and sold it in 2003. Today, it is a \$1.5 billion unit of Xerox Corp. Since then, Wong has invested in over 15 companies as an angel investor. It is in this capacity that he acquired Lore Systems, an enterprise network engineering and cloud computing company with offices throughout the metropolitan area.

“One of the most thrilling aspects of the Locally Grown initiative is being able to engage our Honorees with NFTE's young entrepreneurs. In doing so, we marry the energy and creativity of our students with the experience and know-how of those that understand first-hand what it takes to succeed. We are very fortunate to have our Honorees acting as NFTE ambassadors,” stated John Hasenberg, Chairman of NFTE's Advisory Board, DC Region.

The 2012 class was selected by NFTE's executive committee following a substantial nomination process. The Honorees will act as NFTE ambassadors in the coming months and years. Their first significant engagement was to serve as judges for the Winter Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (regional business plan competition) on January 31. They will be formally recognized at the Dare to Dream Gala on May 2.

“All of this year's Honorees have made significant contributions to the Greater Washington community, promised strong mentorship for our students, and inspired us with their entrepreneurial endeavors and successes. We are thrilled to engage them in NFTE's mission to provide programs that inspire young people from low-income communities to stay in school, leverage business opportunities and plan for their futures,” said Julie Silard Kantor, Executive Director of NFTE, DC Region.

The inaugural slate of Locally Grown entrepreneurs in 2011 included: Aaron Batalion, Living Social; Elliott Bisnow, Summit Series; Matt Curry, Curry's Auto Service, Inc.; Seth Goldman, Honest Tea; Michelle Lee, STG International, Inc.; Mark Michael, Occasions Caterers; Ada Polla, Alchimie Forever; and Warren Thompson, Thompson Hospitality.

About the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship

Too many young people today drop out of school and struggle to break the cycle of poverty. Since 1987, NFTE has been inspiring young people to pursue educational opportunities, start their own businesses, and succeed in life. By providing entrepreneurship education programs relevant to the real world, NFTE empowers students to own their educations in and out of the classroom and to find their own path to success. Hundreds of thousands of students have discovered opportunity all around them through entrepreneurship via thousands of certified educators worldwide. NFTE supports active programs in 21 states and 10 other countries through our network of program offices and licensed partners. Over 24,000 DC youth have participated in NFTE through their schools. Entrepreneurs are a powerful driver of economic growth and NFTE sows the seeds of innovation in students worldwide. For more information, visit www.nfte.com.

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