

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 15 YEARS
OF GROOMING CULTURALLY DIVERSE LEADERS
*ANNOUNCES 2008 WINNERS OF ANNUAL SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD***

SEATTLE, WA—December 17, 2008. Seattle-based Executive Development Institute (EDI) today announced the highlights of its 15th anniversary program in the Greater Puget Sound and Greater Portland (Oregon) areas. Since 1994, EDI has been providing culturally tailored leadership programs to put Asian-Pacific professionals on a fast track for success. Originally begun in Seattle, WA, the program has now grown to the Portland, Oregon area, graduating 408 professionals in the Greater Puget Sound area and 37 in Oregon.

“No company or community can be stronger than the sum of its people,” commented Starr Macdonald, Executive Director. “EDI is passionate and skilled at developing culturally diverse leaders to allow them to make a fuller contribution in all aspects of their life. Just as metals are made stronger by mixing different alloys, companies likewise are made stronger by fully engaging every person and a diversity of cultures to improve morale, business performance and their communities.”

Participants from global and local companies such as Boeing, Microsoft, Nike, Safeco, a Liberty Mutual Company, Norpac, Weyerhaeuser, State Farm Insurance, REI, NW Natural Gas, Nordstrom, KeyBank, PGE and the U.S. Postal Service, participate in nine-month long programs called “Leadership Discovery” and “Leadership Navigation” that teach self-discovery and leadership skills such as helping individuals become more aware of the unique cultural and values differences between the Asian-Pacific cultures and the mainstream American culture and how to best translate these values into the corporate business environment.

Each year, EDI also recognizes an individual and/or a corporation for their outstanding, on-going support towards EDI’s mission statement. Past winners include Nike, S. Mae Fujita Numata, Vanna

Novak, Ted Yamamura, United Airlines, The Boeing Company, KeyBank and many others who have devoted their time and financial support of EDI's mission. This year's winners include Colleen Yamaguchi, a professional leadership coach and consultant from Seattle, Lillian Tsai, founder and president of TsaiComms, LLC, an intercultural competency consulting firm in Portland, Oregon, and NW Natural Gas located also in Portland, Oregon.

"Receiving the 2008 EDI Special Recognition Award was a tremendous honor for me and certainly a highlight of my 15-year involvement with EDI", said Colleen Yamaguchi. "In helping to develop and chair this year's pilot Leadership Navigation Program, I was well rewarded by a class of talented, motivated and courageous managers who were willing to stretch themselves as leaders.

"As an executive coach and mentor at EDI for the past two years, it has been my privilege and honor to work with some highly motivated individuals whose ambitions have brought them to a point in their careers where all they needed is that extra boost," stated Lillian Tsai. "Every EDI graduate is an inspiration to future generations of Asian Pacific Americans, and I am extremely grateful and humbled in being presented this award."

"NW Natural is very honored and pleased to be recognized by EDI for helping to establish the EDI program in Portland," stated Grant Yoshihara, NW Natural's Vice President, Utility Operations. "EDI provides an excellent, culturally focused leadership development program that represents an important investment in the development of emerging leaders from Asian and, in the future, Hispanic backgrounds in our Company. As a 150-year old Oregon company serving an increasingly diverse customer base, the program is beneficial to our employees seeking leadership roles as well as in improving our service to ethnically diverse customers. We remain committed to continuing to work with EDI to expand their program offerings and effectiveness."

Founded in 1994, the Executive Development Institute (EDI) was formed under the guidance and direction of the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce in response to the observation that Japanese Americans were under-represented in corporate America's key leadership roles where the most critical decisions were influenced. The program quickly expanded to include all Asian-Pacific communities as it was determined that all Asian ethnicities share many of the same cultural values. Now in its 15th year, EDI's impact positively empowers participants, businesses, community agencies, and community/business leaders. Over 500 EDI alumni from 15 Asian-Pacific ethnicities spanning five generations are living and working in the Seattle and Portland area today.

For more information, visit www.ediorg.org