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Contact: Catherine Easby-Smith
(202) 833-0060 manacatherine@aol.com

LATINA LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE NATION PARTICIPATE IN SECOND CLASS OF MANA'S AVANZAMOS® FELLOWSHIP AND MANA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Austin, Texas, February 9, 2004— MANA, A National Latina Organization (MANA) held the second class of its Avanzamos® Fellowship Training Program and MANA Leadership Institute from January 29-31 in Austin, Texas. The participants are leaders in their local MANA Chapters and communities across the country, and include corporate professionals from many fields, educators, state and federal government employees, and employees of various non-profit organizations. The Fellowship Program's primary sponsor is Ford Motor Company Fund. State Farm Insurance Companies and Altria Group, Inc. provided additional support.

The Avanzamos® Fellowship Program was established in 2002 to provide a network of trainers of mentors for MANA's National HERMANITAS® Program. Through this three day program, the class of 20 selected MANA leaders are trained to directly affect hundreds of women and teens within their communities. The program consists of one day of "Talent to Lead" from the Gallup Organization, a second day focused on mentoring and mentor-training, and a third day devoted to local and national leadership within MANA.

The National HERMANITAS® Program is a youth development effort designed to meet the specific needs of young Latina adolescents. The program encourages Hispanic adolescent girls to stay in school and to pursue high academic goals. MANA and other community members volunteer their time to mentor young Latinas, and the program involves partnering with their families, schools, communities, and other organizations. The Avanzamos® Program complements the HERMANITAS® Program by providing chapters with excellent leaders to provide training to the volunteer mentors.

The women who participated in the Training Conference are Alma Alvarez of Bloomington, IL; Claudia Chavez of San Diego, CA; Zoila Covarrubias of San Antonio, TX; Rebecca J. DeLaRosa of Talahassee, FL; Cecelia Garcia of Española, NM; Bridget Gonzales of Washington, D.C.; Lauren Pacheco of Chicago, IL; Janet Padilla of Detroit, MI; Kirstin Palacios of Orlando, FL; Maria Ramirez of Corpus Christi, TX; Stella J. Ruiz of Kansas City, KS; Lucy Santana of Santa Ana, CA; Heidy Servin-Baez of Alexandria, VA; Dolores Smith of Santa Rosa, CA; Linda Valenzuela of Imperial, CA; Maria D. Villanueva of Santa Rosa, CA; Zoe Younker of Sacramento, CA; Carolyn Zamora of Chantilly, VA; Glendelia Zavala of Edinburg, TX; and Julie Zavala of Detroit, MI.

The Fellows were chosen through a competitive application process and collectively brought an impressive list of experience. Each woman has made a three-year commitment to the program and will be conducting mentor-raining sessions for their local HERMANITAS ® Program.

(page 2/2)

MANA Board Members and Chapter Presidents joined Fellows on the second and third days of this program for the MANA Leadership Institute. The agenda consisted of mentor-training and leadership training for MANA leaders. Representatives of HMA Associates; the Gallup Organization, the National Community for Latino Leadership, Inc.; and Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER) joined the MANA Board in leading these leadership sessions.

"I was awed by the caliber of women who participated in the AvanZamos® Fellowship and MANA Leadership Institute," stated Alma Morales Riojas, President and CEO of MANA. "Their diversity – of age, region, ethnicity, and experience – highlights the diversity of our membership and the communities that we serve. The major quality that they all share is true dedication to service for the betterment of their communities and commitment to youth development. The Fellows are already leaders, and I am confident that this training has only strengthened their skills and experience."

"Thanks to the dedication and support of our sponsors, Ford Motor Company Fund, State Farm Insurance Companies, and Altria Group, Inc.," Ms. Riojas continued, "hundreds of young Latinas across the country will benefit from their expertise."

MANA, A National Latina Organization, is a nonprofit, advocacy organization headquartered in the nation's capital, Washington, D. C. With chapters across the country, it is the oldest National Latina membership organization in the United States. MANA, whose mission is to empower Latinas through leadership development, community service, and advocacy, envisions a national community of informed Latina activists working to improve the quality of life for all Hispanics.

MANA also has the only national young Latinas' mentoring program for girls 11 to 17, "HERMANITAS®" which brings over 100 girls to Washington DC to a summer institute that includes a briefing at the White House and a visit to the girls' Congressional representatives

Information on MANA can be obtained at the web site: www.hermana.org or send an e-mail to hermana2@aol.com