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AFI PROPOSES NATIONAL EXPANSION OF AFI SCREEN EDUCATION CENTER

**Joined by Clay Aiken, AFI Leadership Urges Congress, DoED
to Support AFI's Screen Education Program in Schools Nationwide**

Washington, DC, July 29, 2003—Executives of the American Film Institute (AFI), accompanied today on their visit to Capitol Hill, the White House and the US Department of Education by AMERICAN IDOL's Clay Aiken, urge the expansion of AFI's Screen Education Center into schools across America.

The AFI Screen Education Center empowers teachers to use filmmaking and media production to engage students in the study of traditional subject matter, get them excited about what they are learning, and give them new tools for expressing their knowledge and understanding. AFI believes screen literacy—the ability to read and write the language of the screen—is a core 21st Century skill.

AFI is today proposing that Congress provide additional funding to expand the K-12 program from a demonstration project into a national level program. AFI Director and CEO, Jean Picker Firstenberg, who heads the AFI delegation, explains:

"The American Film Institute's 35-year investment in professional film education is now being introduced into the public school system through the AFI Screen Education Center. Thousands of young people are now learning to use digital cameras and computer editing systems to tell stories, and to demonstrate mastery of their studies. In the process, they are preparing for the jobs of the future by becoming literate in the language of the 21st Century."

"AFI is grateful to members of Congress and the Department of Education for their support, which has made this program possible in its developmental stages. It is now time to take AFI Screen Education to the nation. We are so pleased that Clay Aiken has joined with AFI today to help emphasize education's crucial role in American life," Firstenberg said.

Clay Aiken, who was completing his studies to become a special education teacher before the AMERICAN IDOL competition and his astonishing rise to super-stardom, supports AFI's efforts to expand the K-12 AFI Screen Education Center program nationwide.

"Since I've had to put my own work with special needs kids on hold for now, I am excited to do what I can to support worthwhile educational efforts, particularly those which reach kids who might otherwise fall through the cracks. The AFI Screen Education Center programs certainly work with highly motivated students, but also engage those who for one reason or another—language barriers, learning disabilities, different ways of processing information—haven't enjoyed success with their studies before. I'm here to thank members of Congress and the Department of Education for supporting this great program," said Aiken.

AFI's Screen Education Center was launched in 2001-2002 with its first grant from the US Department of Education in six Los Angeles high schools. In 2002-2003, it reached 21 high schools in Northern and Southern California, Montgomery County, MD and Washington, DC—reaching a total of 4000 students. In 2003-2004 it will continue at its current level. AFI's Jean Picker Firstenberg, James Hindman (Co-Director and COO), Nick DeMartino (Associate Director, Strategic Planning), and Mitch Aiken, (Director of AFI Screen Education) urge Congress to extend the program beyond its current level and transform the AFI Screen Education Center into a national program.

Congressional leaders, including Majority Leader William Frist (R-TN), Senators Dole (R-NC), Edwards (D-NC), Feinstein (D-CA), Boxer (D-CA), Specter (R-PA), Harkin (D-IO), Mikulski (D-MD) and Lott (R-MS), plan to meet with the AFI delegation.

The day includes a 9:00 a.m. White House meeting for Clay Aiken, followed by a meeting at the US Department of Education with Acting Deputy Secretary Dr. Eugene Hickok, who has visited the AFI Campus in Los Angeles, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Dr. Robert Pasternack, and Director of Educational Technology John Bailey. Also included are an AFI-hosted luncheon for Congressional leaders in the US Capitol's SC-6 and an evening reception at Morton's of Chicago as guests of Allen J. Bernstein, AFI Trustee and Chair and CEO of the Morton's Restaurant Group.

More About AFI

AFI is the preeminent organization dedicated to advancing and preserving the art of film, television and other forms of the moving image. AFI trains the next generation of filmmakers at its world-renowned Conservatory, provides film preservation leadership and explores new digital technologies in moviemaking. AFI's New Media Ventures programs bring together the creative and digital communities, as the department seeks to develop a literacy program for the 21st century, helping young people learn to read and write screens of all sizes—cinema, television, computer and the Internet. With AFI ON SCREEN, the institute is the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the US, with programs at the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival (AFI FEST); the AFI National Film Theater at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. A 49,000 square foot complex with three theatres—one historic, two new state-of-the-art stadium-style theatres—the AFI Silver exhibits film and video generally unavailable elsewhere in the region. AFI's annual almanac for the 21st century, **AFI AWARDS**, honors the most outstanding motion pictures and television programs of the year. **AFI's 100 Years . . . 100 Movies, 100 Stars, 100 Laughs, 100 Thrills, 100 Passions and 100 Heroes & Villains** have ignited extraordinary public interest in classic American movies. During the past 31 years, AFI's Life Achievement Award has become the highest honor for a career in film. More information about AFI can be found by visiting its Web site, located at www.AFI.com.

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