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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2010

Compton Unified's Whaley Middle School Eighth Grade Girls and Mothers Are Empowered Through Words of Author Dr. Saban

COMPTON, Calif., — Over 160 Compton Unified School District (CUSD) Whaley Middle School eighth grade girls heard words of wisdom Tuesday, March 16, when Dr. Cheryl Saban spoke to them about self-worth and empowerment.

The event, sponsored through CUSD and Whaley Middle School's partnership with the non-profit EmpowHer Institute, was held in the school's cafeteria, 14401 S. Gibson St., from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saban recently released her new book, "What Is Your Self Worth? A Women's Guide to Validation." She also provided students with free copies of her published work and t-shirts. The EmpowHer Institute is committed to decreasing high school drop out rates among females in low-income communities. Attendees included several mothers, grandmothers and guardians; CUSD Board of Trustees member Emma Sharif; and Betty LaMarr, CEO and founder, EmpowHer Institute.

Over the course of her speech Saban discussed the importance of female empowerment and also shared some of her personal experiences, which included being raped at the age of 18, coping with her trauma and striving for success. "I'm here because eighth grade girls are on the cusp of womanhood. They have a lot to hope for and they have a desire to succeed," Saban explained. "I want all women and girls who feel hopeless and helpless to find their self-worth and to build their self-esteem." She added, "Females are bombarded by mixed messages where society tells us to be one thing and the media tell us to be another. Young women are exposed to inappropriate

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Words of Encouragement for Whaley's Eighth Grade Girls

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information at a young age and are told they must do certain things to fit in.” Saban said she wants to stress the importance of providing girls with positive support. “Girls are looking for someone to acknowledge them but it’s also important to let them know they can grow up to be their own best advocate.”

According to Principal Renee Cobb, the assembly was an opportunity to encourage female eighth-graders to develop high self-esteem, succeed in school, and pursue their career aspirations. “It was healthy for our girls to know they are important enough for someone as busy as Dr. Saban to set aside time to speak to them,” she said. “What’s really special about today’s assembly is that it promotes girls and their ambitions. We don’t know what the future will bring, so we need to mentally prepare them so they can take care of themselves.” Cobb added, “They’re about to go to high school and they need to be ready for the challenges they will face.”

Eighth-grader Breanna Saenz said she took Saban’s message of female empowerment to heart. “Her speech was inspiring. Now I know I’m not the only girl with problems. I look forward to reading her book,” she noted. “When she told us she was raped and that she somehow coped with it, moved on and became successful, it was really powerful and surprising for me.” Saenz added, “I know people who have gone through her situation and they need to know they’re not alone.”

For Africa Coley, eighth grade, the speech was a lesson in how to be successful. “Girls just need to stop messing around with dudes at a young age, focus on school and make something of themselves,” she said. “That’s what I’m going to do.” Coley added, “Most of all I learned not to care what others say about me, and just be myself.”

Additional information may be obtained by contacting the CUSD Office of Communications at (310) 639-4321, ext. 46561 or www.compton.k12.ca.us.

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PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS TO ACCOMPANY:

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A Woman's Wisdom — Author Dr. Cheryl Saban encouraged over 160 Compton Unified School District (CUSD) Whaley Middle School eighth grade girls and their mothers to pursue their dreams, build self-esteem and know their self-worth Tuesday, March 15. Her speech, sponsored by non-profit EmpowHer Institute, was designed to instill female empowerment in Whaley's female students. All Whaley eighth grade girls also received a copy of Dr. Saban's new book, "What Is Your Self Worth? A Women's Guide to Validation."

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