NEWS RELEASE

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Media contacts:
Brian Malina
908-698-3930
brian.c.malina@verizon.com

Alberto Canal
908-559-6367
alberto.c.canal@verizon.com

Blind Mountain Climber Erik Weihenmayer and Actor-Director Eric Close Show Teachers How to Inspire Adventure in the Classroom, Using Verizon's Thinkfinity.org

Session Held at National Education Computing Conference, at Which Verizon Also Unveils New Educational Resources for Thinkfinity.org

WASHINGTON -- Blind mountain climber, adventurer and author Erik Weihenmayer teamed with actor-director Eric Close of the CBS series "Without A Trace" on Tuesday (June 30) to demonstrate how bringing a sense of adventure to the classroom can inspire and engage students to reach their full potential.

Titled "Inspiring the Inner Explorer: Creating a Spirit of Adventure in the Classroom," the session at the 2009 National Educational Computing Conference at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center here was hosted by the Verizon Foundation.

Weihenmayer, a former teacher, and Close appeared together for the first time in this new initiative, which pairs principles of adventure sports with practical tools like Verizon's Thinkfinity.org, to help teachers move beyond the textbook when teaching. Weihenmayer put that concept into action by inviting Close and several teachers from the audience to take part in a rope team exercise to demonstrate the importance of teamwork on the mountain and in the classroom.

"I would not have reached any of those summits without the right tools or the right team," Weihenmayer told the teachers. "In this time, when you as teachers are expected to do more with less, and the mandate for student achievement is greater than ever, I hope you will leverage Thinkfinity.org as one of the tools that can help you reach the summit in your classroom."

Thinkfinity.org is the Verizon Foundation's free, comprehensive Web site that contains thousands of educational resources including K-12 lesson plans, online educational activities, videos and other materials to enhance teacher effectiveness and improve student achievement.

In addition to the demonstration, the Verizon Foundation unveiled a new feature on Thinkfinity.org that includes a collection of free educational resources designed to inspire adventure and curiosity in the classroom.

Among the resources included in the Thinkfinity.org adventure feature are:

- **Blind Mountain Climber on Summiting Everest --** In the fifty years since Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzig Norgay first saw the view from the top of Mount Everest, thousands have tried to reach that lofty vantage point. In this question-and-answer session with Weihenmayer, the only blind person to ever stand on Everest's peak, National Geographic offers a first-hand account of the brutal cold, savage winds and

crushing fatigue at 29,000 feet (8,840 meters).

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/07/0730_030730_everest.html

- **Blast Off to Learn New Words --** This lesson plan from the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association's Readwritethink.org, will take students on a virtual trip to the moon to help children become excited about reading and develop new vocabulary skills. For grades K-2.

  http://www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/gradesK_2/NewWords/

- **On Top of the World --** If you were standing on the top of Mount Everest, how far would you be able to see to the horizon? In this lesson, students will consider two different strategies for finding an answer. The first strategy is algebraic -- using data about the distance to the horizon from various heights to generate a rule. The second strategy is geometric -- using the radius of the Earth and right-triangle relationships to construct a formula. For grades 9-12.

  http://illuminations.nctm.org/LessonDetail.aspx?id=L711

"Resources such as Verizon's Thinkfinity.org allow students to experience a subject rather than simply hearing about it," said Patrick Gaston, president of the Verizon Foundation. "Whether it's a virtual field trip to the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History or an online activity from American Association for the Advancement of Science's NetLinks that teaches about gravity, Thinkfinity.org can help bring learning to life."

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon Communications, supports the advancement of literacy and K-12 education through its free educational Web site, Thinkfinity.org, and fosters awareness and prevention of domestic violence. In 2008, the Verizon Foundation awarded more than $68 million in grants to nonprofit agencies in the U.S.

and abroad. It also matched the charitable donations of Verizon employees and retirees, resulting in an additional $26 million in combined contributions to nonprofits. Through Verizon Volunteers, one of the nation's largest employee volunteer programs, Verizon employees and retirees have volunteered more than 3 million hours of community service since 2000. For more information on the foundation, visit *www.verizonfoundation.org*.

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