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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Hartford Receives National Award For School Indoor Air Quality Program**

December 27, 2006 – Hartford Public Schools was one of five school districts in the country to receive a “National Mentorship Award” from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at a recent symposium held in Washington, D.C. Attended by more than 500 school officials, the purpose of the symposium was to discuss how to identify and resolve indoor environmental problems and improve indoor air quality for millions of students and school staff nationwide.

Hartford was one of five school districts selected to serve as peer faculty in several key sessions aimed at helping other districts to implement effective indoor air quality programs. EPA presented the Faculty School Districts with the 2006 *Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools* National Mentorship Award to recognize their commitment to mentoring school districts through sharing their knowledge and experiences with school districts nationally.

“Schools that have implemented systematic indoor air quality management programs continue to see improvements in their school environments,” said Bill Wehrum, Acting Administrator of the EPA Office of Air and Radiation. “This award recognizes schools that have tackled tough issues and put in place great programs to resolve and prevent indoor environmental risks.”

“Hartford has demonstrated a sincere commitment to creating a safe and healthy learning environment. They have proven the effectiveness of the *Tools for Schools* approach and are an example and inspiration to all of us” said Elizabeth Cotsworth, Director, Office of Radiation and Indoor Air.

EPA studies show that indoor levels of pollutants may be two to five times higher than outdoor levels. Pollutants in schools such as radon, asbestos, chemicals and allergens can

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pose serious health risks for students and staff. Allergies and asthma attacks can be triggered by mold, dust, furred and feathered animals, secondhand smoke and chemicals sometimes found in the school environment.

Indoor air quality can also affect student performance. Students who are exposed to poor indoor air quality experience decreased performance, diminished concentration levels and score lower on standardized tests than students attending schools with good air quality, the EPA said.

Representing Hartford Public Schools at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Symposium were Dr. Al Hinds, Chief of Building Operations, and Pam Clark, Clinic Nursing and Support Supervisor.

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