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H-E-B Chairman and CEO Earns Texas Public Schools Friend of the Year Award

Dallas (August 30, 2005) – Friends of Texas Public Schools has named Charles Butt, Chairman and CEO of H.E. Butt Grocery Company, the first recipient of its Texas Public Schools *Friend of the Year* Award for his tireless commitment to, and support of, public education in Texas.

Colleen Barrett, President of Southwest Airlines, presented the award to Mr. Butt at a special reception they hosted on behalf of Friends of Texas Public Schools at their headquarters in Dallas.

The Friend of the Year Award was founded to recognize an individual who understands that true motivation to excel cannot be found in harsh criticism and accusations of failure. “Mr. Butt carries the sense of optimism we believe is sorely lacking in our society today, especially in regard to our public schools,” says Scott Milder, President and cofounder of Friends.

“We are plagued with the myth that Texas public schools are some sort of disaster,” said Mr. Butt upon accepting his award. “Ill-informed, irresponsible comments like this upset us all and it’s exciting to see you (Friends) speak out on the schools’ behalf. I respect greatly your accepting the challenge of showing Texas that education is an investment, not a cost, that our schools represent a resource, a strength, an opportunity – not a burden.”

While criticism of our public schools is plentiful, celebration of their success is largely nonexistent, Milder added. “The work Mr. Butt and H-E-B do to celebrate public education in Texas through their Excellence in Education Program and others reflects the positive energy we believe is so desperately needed in our public schools.”

Texans have a right to know that, in spite of the many challenges they face, our public schools are achieving more today than ever in their history. The popular myth of widespread failure is just that – a myth. “Talk of failure and reform has eroded the public’s confidence in a system with exponentially more successes than failures,” Milder says. “Unfortunately, reality is nothing more than a person’s perception of it.”

Our mission at Friends is to boost the public’s confidence in public schools by celebrating their success and working together to foster continual improvement. With increased confidence we believe will follow an increase in parental and community involvement, as well as proper and sufficient funding. Celebrating success and continual improvement cannot be mutually exclusive.

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Background information is available at www.fotps.org.