



ASHOKA INNOVATORS FOR THE PUBLIC

# NEWS

CONTACT:

Katherine Hutt, 703-938-4540

KHutt@NautilusCommunications.com

## Gerald Chertavian to Be Inducted Into International Ashoka Fellowship

*Ashoka: Innovators for the Public recognizes founder of "Year Up" for placing young urban adults and corporate America on a shared path to success*

February 25, 2008 (Arlington, Virginia) – Corporate America has a talent problem; they can't fill entry-level technical positions fast enough. Urban young adults have a problem; they aren't prepared for or can't find jobs to lift them out of poverty. *Year Up* has a solution for both: a potent new model for workforce development that offers marketable technical and professional skills and apprenticeships in top companies. Founder *Gerald Chertavian* believes in focusing on the "ABC" of professional skills – attitude, behavior and communications – and encourages teachers, mentors, advisors and a growing network of supporters to show young people consistent respect, something they have often never received. Companies rave about Year Up as a source of pre-screened, pre-trained employees.

For his unique solution to two pressing problems, Chertavian will be one of 21 social entrepreneurs from the United States, Canada, Mexico and Central America who will be inducted into an international fellowship by *Ashoka: Innovators for the Public* at a special ceremony on February 25 at the new Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. Once elected, Fellows benefit from being part of the Ashoka fellowship for life.

Chertavian got the idea for Year Up while serving as a Big Brother after college. While spending time in the housing project where his Little Brother grew up, Chertavian met many disconnected young adults. "We as a society waste a tremendous amount of human capital," says Chertavian. "What I saw in David, his friends and his cousins inspired me to look for ways to close the 'opportunity divide,' to connect those bright but disadvantaged young people with liveable-wage careers and educational opportunities."

Chertavian wrote his entrance essay to Harvard Business School on this social challenge, and discovered that there is a disproportionate number of disconnected 18 to 24-year-old young adults (those who have not progressed beyond a high school diploma and are neither employed nor enrolled in postsecondary education) who are trapped in urban low-income communities and

1700 North Moore Street | Suite 2000 | Arlington, VA 22209 USA | (703) 527-8300 Phone | (703) 527-8383 Fax | [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org) | [www.changemakers.net](http://www.changemakers.net)

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generally regarded as unredeemable or simply forgotten as contributors to society. Chertavian graduated with honors and continued to mentor David while he built up a \$20 million communications company. In 1999, at the age of 34, he sold the firm to pursue his purpose in life. In 2000, he started Year Up with the mission of providing the skills, experience, and supporters needed to empower young adults to reach their potential and succeed in professional careers and higher education. Year Up focuses on marketable skills including customer service, helpdesk support, business communications and investment management and operations.

“Teaching the skills is not that difficult,” he says. “We are good at teaching the technology needed in professional settings. What’s harder is helping a young adult from a disadvantaged background to gain the communications skills and confidence needed to succeed in a prestigious workplace. It’s said that employers hire for skills and fire for behavior. We have high expectations for our participants and we never lower the bar.” In seven years, the program has served more than 1,300 young adults, with 87% of graduates being hired in jobs that pay on average \$30,000 a year.

Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, Ashoka gives leading social entrepreneurs a global network, an international association of their peers. Fellows become lifetime members, receiving initial support that enables them to focus full-time on their work and access to professional and strategic services to help them achieve pattern-changing impact in their fields. Each Fellow is also eligible to apply for supplemental funding for collaborative projects, and to receive training and technical assistance through Ashoka and its partners.

“Ashoka Fellows create pattern-changing solutions for the most pressing social problems of our day,” says Ashoka’s U.S. Director Barbara Kazdan. “Although Ashoka U.S. is only seven years old, we have identified the most inventive and dedicated social entrepreneurs to join with their peers to elevate and strengthen the ‘citizen sector’ here and around the world. We now have 250 Fellows from North America, 85 of whom are from the United States, where they are bringing their innovative programs to all 50 states and the developing world.”

Ashoka Fellows work in six broad fields: learning/youth development, the environment, health, human rights, economic development and civic engagement. Selection criteria include the newness and potential social impact of the idea, as well as the candidate’s entrepreneurial qualities.

*Ashoka: Innovators for the Public is a global community of social entrepreneurs who deliver innovative solutions to social problems. To build this citizen sector community, Ashoka identifies and supports leading social entrepreneurs, creates opportunities for collaboration, and builds systems and institutions that facilitate high impact social solutions. Over the past 26 years since Bill Drayton founded Ashoka, the organization has invested in over 2,000 Ashoka Fellows in more than 60 countries. In 2008 Ashoka will launch programs in Israel and Russia. Ashoka’s global fellowship is privately financed by individuals, venture networks, foundations, and leading business entrepreneurs.*