



CONTACT:
Terri Sullivan
612-399-0213
terris@search-institute.org

October 3, 2011

For Immediate Release

**Dr. Peter Benson, President and CEO of Search Institute, Leaves Legacy
of International Leadership in Positive Youth Development**

Minneapolis, Minn.—Dr. Peter L. Benson, president and CEO of Minneapolis-based Search Institute, died Sunday, Oct. 2, after a year-long fight with cancer. Dr. Benson’s international reputation in human development emerged in the 1990s through his innovative, research-based framework of the Developmental Assets. Dr. Benson’s work wove together rigorous scholarship with a passionate commitment to understanding—and influencing—society to be more attentive to children, youth, and families. His insight, vision, and passion made him a widely sought speaker, writer, and consultant for major national and international events, organizations, and policy initiatives.

“We are deeply sad at the loss of our friend and colleague Dr. Peter Benson,” said Morris Goodwin, Chair of Search Institute Board of Directors. “He was a truly unique and wonderful leader, who taught us and so many around the world how to see children as the gifts they are, instead of the challenges they face. He was a pioneer in positive youth development, and we honor his memory and recommit ourselves to carry on his great and important work for young people.”

The Developmental Assets has become the most widely recognized approach to positive youth development in the United States and, increasingly, around the world. Dr. Benson’s vision,

research, and public voice inspired a “sea change” in research, practice, and policy. His work has guided more than 500 community-based initiatives in 45 states and every Canadian province, and on six continents. The approach has been embraced by most national youth-serving systems and is embedded in the curriculum in numerous colleges and universities. It influences state, national, and international public policy in education, juvenile justice, public health, substance abuse prevention, and other youth-related fields.

Benson joined the staff of Search Institute in 1978 after several years in academia. He became the institute’s president in 1985. He held a doctorate and master’s degree from the University of Denver as well as a master’s degree from Yale University and a bachelor’s degree from Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Among his many honors, Dr. Benson was the first visiting scholar at the William T. Grant Foundation (2001–2003) and, in 1989, he received the William James Award for Career Contributions to Psychology from the American Psychological Association.

Dr. Benson was the author or editor of more than a dozen books on child and adolescent development and social change, including, most recently, *Parent, Teacher, Mentor, Friend; Vision: Awakening Your Potential to Create a Better World; Sparks: How Parents Can Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers; and All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents (2nd edition).*

Funeral arrangements are pending. Search Institute’s board of directors and executive leadership are working together to determine an appropriate memorial to commemorate Dr. Benson’s legacy. The organization will be led by the current executive team through this transition period. Questions can be directed to Terri Sullivan, Search Institute Director of Community Strategies and Learning, at 612-399-0213 or 1-800-888-7828.

###