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CONTACT: Erin Goldsmith
Media Relations Specialist
(510) 428-3069
egoldsmith@mail.cho.org

Children's Hospital Oakland Celebrates First FACES for the Future Graduate Accepted to Top Medical School

April 23, 2009—Oakland, Calif. —A graduate of Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland's FACES for the Future program, Vietnam-born Linh Dao proves that the American Dream is still alive. Linh, whose father was imprisoned for his service in the South Vietnamese Army, will pursue her dream of being a surgeon at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles this fall—a dream that was born at Children's Hospital Oakland.

"I really love surgery. Shadowing Dr. Escajeda during surgery, I developed a fascination for the human body," Linh said about the time she spent with Children's Hospital Oakland anesthesiologist, Mark Escajeda, MD, one of the many physicians she shadowed as a FACES student. "The FACES program gave me the opportunity to observe medical professionals in action. That led me to discover my passion for surgery."

FACES for the Future is a 3-year mentoring program associated with Children's Hospital Oakland that introduces underrepresented minority high school students to the health profession. The disproportionately low number of people of color present in the medical field led Tomas Magana, MD, and Children's Hospital Oakland's Barbara Stagger, MD, to create the program in 2000. To date, about 140 students have graduated from FACES, and Linh, a graduate of the program's first class, is the first to be accepted to medical school.

"Linh was an extraordinary student and wonderful example of what the FACES program set out to accomplish," said Dr. Magana. "We are so proud that she was accepted to a top medical school and we look forward to more students following in her footsteps."

Linh has come a long way from the little girl who helped her father scour East Bay liquor stores for cardboard boxes to sell to a West Oakland recycler in order to supplement the family's income. This June Linh, who graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in integrative biology in 2007, will attend another FACES graduation, only this time she will serve as keynote speaker at the event that will honor 2009's 20 graduates. Graduation will take place on Friday, June 5 at 6pm at Scott's Seafood in Oakland's Jack London Square.

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About Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland

Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland is Northern California's only freestanding and independent children's hospital. Children's is the leader in many pediatric specialties including neonatology, cardiology, neurosurgery and intensive care. The hospital is a designated Level 1 pediatric trauma center and has the largest pediatric critical care facility in the region. Children's Hospital has 190 licensed beds, 201 hospital-based physicians in 30 specialties, more than 2,611 employees and an operating budget of \$312 million. Children's research arm, Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute, has about 300 staff members and an annual budget of more than \$49 million. Primary research funding comes from the National Institutes of Health. The institute is a leader in translational blood diseases, developing new vaccines for infectious diseases and discovering new treatment protocols for previously fatal or debilitating conditions such as cancers, sickle cell disease and thalassemia, diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, pediatric obesity, nutritional deficiencies, birth defects, hemophilia and cystic fibrosis.