**For Immediate Release:**

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**National Guard Youth Foundation Receives $4.7 Million Grant through Microsoft YouthSpark Initiative**

***Grant Will Provide ChalleNGe Program with Access to Affordable Technology, Educational Resources***

ALEXANDRIA, Va.– The [National Guard Youth Foundation](http://www.ngyf.org/), a nonprofit organization focused on helping adolescents who have dropped out of school to get a second chance at an education and job training, announced that it has received a donation of $4.7 million in software and resources from Microsoft’s YouthSpark initiative to strengthen the National Guard Youth Challe*NG*e Program’s job training and skill development resources.

"Through the National Guard Youth Foundation, we are driving innovation in education by supporting a proven program that provides those who’ve dropped out of school with a pathway back to graduation – the National Guard Youth Challe*NG*e Program," **said Curt Kolcun, Vice President for Microsoft’s U.S. Public Sector.** "As a nation, we can’t afford to let one million young people drop out of school and expect to remain competitive in the global economy. We are pleased to make this donation to provide Challe*NG*e participants with the access to tools and resources that will help them prepare for graduation and build the skill set necessary to compete in today’s workforce.”

"We are deeply grateful for Microsoft’s generous investment in the National Guard Youth Foundation and for its national leadership on empowering youth," **said Gen. Craig McKinley, USAF (Ret.), Chairman, National Guard Youth Foundation Board of Directors.** "Challe*NG*e provides young people the opportunity to improve their life skills, education and employability. This donation will be instrumental in providing resources that help Challe*NG*e cadets prepare for a future of success.”

The funding will support the National Guard Youth Challe*NG*e Program’s work with nearly 9,000 students in Puerto Rico and the following states: Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

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**About The National Guard Youth Challe*NG*e Program**

Challe*NG*e is a 17- month, voluntary, second-chance program for 16- to 18-year-olds who have dropped out of school. Participants have the opportunity to enhance life skills, increase self-esteem, learn job skills, and earn a high school diploma, GED or return to high school to graduate with their peers. Challe*NG*e has undergone rigorous evaluations, the results of which show it yields success for both its participants and its funders. Since the program’s inception in 1993, Challe*NG*e has grown to 34 programs in 27 states and Puerto Rico, and has helped more than 115,000 former dropouts make it to graduation day.

**About The National Guard Youth Foundation**

The National Guard Youth Foundation, a 501(c)(3), supports the National Guard Youth Challe*NG*e Program’s efforts to address the nation’s high school dropout crisis by giving troubled youth a second chance, helping them graduate and continue their education or join the skilled workforce in America. The Foundation is also working with Challe*NG*e to scale the program to impact more youth at risk of being lost and forgotten. To learn more about the Foundation’s initiatives, please visit [www.ngyf.org](http://www.ngyf.org).

**About Microsoft YouthSpark**

Microsoft YouthSpark is a global initiative that aims to create opportunities for 300 million youth in more than 100 countries during the next three years. This companywide initiative includes Citizenship and other company programs — both new and enhanced — that empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential by connecting them with greater opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship.  Find out more at: <http://www.microsoft.com/youthspark>.