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**Alia Abdulahi, Auburn High School Student, Receives 2011 Samantha Smith Award
from the Maine Women's Fund**

Lewiston: The Maine Women's Fund is pleased to announce Auburn High School student, Alia Abdulahi, as our 2011 Samantha Smith Award Recipient. This award is given to a young woman from Maine who works to promote social change in her school or community, inspires other girls to become active in supporting long lasting change in Maine, uses her voice boldly to influence others and makes a difference in her community. Alia Abdulahi wholeheartedly embodies the spirit of this award. We will honor and hear her thoughts on how women are creatively shaping the future of Maine at our May 18th [Leadership Luncheon](#).

Ms. Abdulahi is recognized as an outstanding young woman who stretches herself to accomplish high standards in the academic world and to lead in the school and community. As a vital component of the Unity Project, a Resilience Learning System that partners with after school programs for middle and high school students, Ms. Abdulahi attended school sessions for developing leaders to address harassment and hate. She also attended the summer program held at UMF with delegates from around Maine, New England, and Ireland to meet and plan successful programs in their respective communities to address tolerance and better understanding for all.

Through her voice, character and actions, this year's award recipient represents all things bold. She walks her talk and continues to stand out with grace and commitment representing her Somali heritage and embracing her American education and opportunities. Unafraid to speak up, Alia is well respected for her voice and her peers look to her for support and encouragement. At the fine age of 15, she is recognized as an exceptional spokesperson for the entire community. We are delighted to celebrate Ms. Abdulahi's accomplishments by presenting her with the 2011 Samantha Smith Award.

About the Maine Women's Fund

In 22 years, the Maine Women's Fund has granted over \$1.5 million to nonprofits across the State which are creating long-lasting change that will build the economic security of thousands of women and girls. Through grantmaking, we are pushing for policy changes and investing in education and girls' independence. We are helping women build and expand businesses, train for better jobs and wages, build assets and make smart financial decisions.

We are working with women as leaders and donors to prioritize women as key agents of change for their families, communities and Maine.

About Samantha Smith

Samantha Smith, born in Houlton, Maine, gained international attention in 1982 when she wrote to Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, trying to understand Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. In response to her letter, Samantha and her family were invited to the Soviet Union and she became known as America's Youngest Ambassador. In the next few years, she continued to travel the world as a child ambassador. In 1985, Samantha and her father were killed in a plane crash. Samantha remains to this day, an inspiration of idealism, a voice of change and a model for peace and understanding.

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