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“High School Musical” Director and renown Film Choreographer to receive Top Honor

February 2, 2009 – Pasadena, CA – Emmy winning director/choreographer Kenny Ortega will receive an Impact Award for Outstanding Director for a Motion Picture from the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) on February 20th for his critically acclaimed work on the Disney Channel Original Movie, “High School Musical 2.” The NHMC, one of the country’s foremost Latino media advocacy and civil rights organizations, will present the award to Ortega at its upcoming 12th Annual Impact Awards Gala at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, celebrating outstanding theatrical, television and film performances by Latinos both in front and back of camera. The annual fete also recognizes outstanding service and commitment to the Latino community. “Over the course of Kenny Ortega’s 30 year career he has consistently done great work, has worked with the best in the industry and has never forgotten the importance of giving back,” said Alex Nogales, NHMC President & CEO. Mr. Ortega will join past NHMC Impact Award recipients Edward James Olmos, America Ferrera, Eva Longoria and George Lopez in this prestigious honor.

Born in Palo Alto, California and raised in Redwood City, the California native admits his “first love” has always been the theatre. Ortega began his career at the age of 13, performing in plays and musicals including the show, “Oliver,” with Georgia Brown. Kenny is known in the Bay Area as a member and staging director/choreographer for the “Tubes,” the 1980’s rock ‘n’ roll band who were among the first to blend theatre, performing arts and dance into rock concerts. It was after a Tubes performance in Los Angeles that Cher approached Ortega to choreograph her television special. He soon became the choreographer of choice for the entertainment industry’s biggest musical artists. But scale isn’t all that matters to Kenny, “A great book and great characters – that’s what I care about,” says the choreographer of the blockbuster motion picture “Dirty Dancing,” not just the size of the production.”

Early in his film choreography career, Ortega had the honor of working alongside Gene Kelly as a choreographer on the movie “Xanadu” and attributes much of his understanding of choreography for the camera to Kelly, who became his mentor. Kenny earned two Emmy awards (Outstanding Direction and Outstanding Choreography) for his work on the Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games and his choreography credits include “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” “Pretty in Pink” and world tours for such artists as Barbra Streisand and Michael Jackson. The consummate professional, if Ortega catches an actor or actress yawning, he forces them to pay him a dollar. After production he donates all the proceeds to the “Make a Wish Foundation.”

For more information on the NHMC Impact Awards Gala or for sponsorship opportunities or tickets to the February 20th event, please go to www.nhmc.org or call (626) 792-6462.

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