

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*NEWS FROM*

## **FIFTH WARD ENRICHMENT PROGRAM, INC.**

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**Media Contact:** Margo Williams Handy, MWH Public Relations, (281) 213-9554

### **STATE REPRESENTATIVE SYLVESTER TURNER TO BE HONORED AT THE “HEART OF HOUSTON” AWARDS LUNCHEON**

HOUSTON (May 11, 2006) -- When he launched the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program (FWEP) in 1984 as a way to motivate young men at risk for dropping out of school, Ernest McMillan suspected he was on the right track.

Two decades later, the non-profit organization is still running strong despite the challenges of staying afloat in tough economic times.

“We’re a small agency facing difficult front-line challenges every day from the experiences of the youth we are encountering,” McMillan said. “As we constantly grapple with these problems, we are depending on our network of friends, supporters, mentors and volunteers to help us sustain our efforts and be a consistent force in the community.”

On Friday, June 9, the organization will host its major fundraiser of the year – the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual “Heart of Houston” luncheon at The Junior League, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane. The public is invited to attend.

State Rep. Sylvester Turner will be keynote speaker at the luncheon, to take place from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Turner, who was selected as Speaker Pro Tempore during the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislature, represents District 139.

The Fifth Ward Enrichment Program empowers boys to become responsible men and productive members of their families and community. The United Way agency achieves that goal through some innovative programs for youths and their parents.

There’s individual and group counseling, tutorial support, mentoring, life skills seminars and cultural activities such as field trips to the Houston Ballet, the Houston Zoological Gardens and other destinations.

To date, FWEP has served more than 2,300 disadvantaged and at-risk families, 3,800 school-aged youths, and 275 young fathers in more than 20 support services through six program components.

“FWEP works,” McMillan said, “because it remains a consistent part of young people’s lives.”

“These kids are missing consistency – people who show up in their lives and contribute to their uplift,” McMillan said. “The ‘Heart of Houston’ is our opportunity to not only highlight the work we do, but to show that these young men can contribute to the community and succeed in life.”

FWEP’s “Heart of Houston” awards are presented to individuals who personify the essence of the program – cultivating leadership and empowering youth. Turner, this year’s award recipient, is being honored for his civic and community leadership.

As speaker Pro Tempore – the second most powerful position in the Texas House – Turner continues to work on reformative issues concerning education, health care, human services, consumer rights and juvenile justice, as well as other crucial issues.

Previous recipients of the award include Houston Texans owner Bob McNair; U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige; State Sen. Rodney Ellis, (D-Houston); and Anthony Hall, chief administrative officer for the City of Houston.

“Every year, we honor outstanding men so that these young men see a shining example of overcoming adversity and becoming positive contributors to society,” McMillan said.

Sponsors for this year’s Heart of Houston event are presenting sponsor AT&T; Ace of Hearts sponsors Wells Fargo, Shell Oil Company; King of Hearts sponsors Turko, Aztec Facility Services, Randalls Food Markets, ConocoPhillips, Direct Energy, James and Mary Prince, Barnes and Turner Law Firm; Queen of Hearts sponsors CenterPoint Energy, Washington Mutual, Unity Bank, Rod and Mariah Crosby, Revelation Urban Development Institute, Entergy, The Ensemble Theatre, Henry Sauer; Jack of Hearts sponsors Alfred Calloway, McConnell & Jones; Enterprise Advisory, and Michael and Consuella Whipple.

For reservations or more information, contact Margo Williams Handy at (281) 213-9554 or email [hoh@fwepinc.org](mailto:hoh@fwepinc.org).

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**FACT SHEET:**

- What:** Fifth Ward Enrichment Program  
8<sup>th</sup> Annual “Heart of Houston” Awards Luncheon
- Where:** The Junior League  
1811 Briar Oaks Lane  
Houston, TX
- When:** Friday, June 9, 2006  
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Format:** Luncheon ceremony recognizing Houstonians for excellence in leadership and service
- Event Chairperson:** Ernest McMillan, Executive Director, FWEP
- Award Recipient:** The Honorable Sylvester Turner  
State Representative - District 139
- FWEP History** Rudy Wagner and current Chief Executive Officer, Ernest McMillan, founded Houston’s Fifth Ward Enrichment Program (FWEP) in 1984. It was established in response to the community’s skyrocketing rates of teenage pregnancy, crime, students failing to complete high school, drug use, and a lack of responsible African-American fathers.
- Initially located in E.O. Smith Middle School, FWEP expanded in 1988 and now offers programming in six Fifth Ward schools. The program regularly serves approximately 250 African-American and Hispanic boys between the ages of 12-19.
- About FWEP:** For more than 20 years, the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program has provided services and programs designed to empower boys to become responsible men, and productive members of their families and community. Its model program has served over 2,300 disadvantaged and at-risk families, 3,800 school-aged youths, and 275 young fathers in more than 20 support services through six program components.
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