



## HOUSTON CHRONICLE ARCHIVES

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### **Event to raise money for Fifth Ward project / Program aids school-aged minority males**

By ANITRA D. BROWN, HOUSTON CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

The Fifth Ward Enrichment Program will hold its eighth annual Heart of Houston luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Friday at the Junior League of Houston, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane. Tickets are \$50. The event is the 22-year-old organization's major fundraising effort.

Program founder Ernest McMillan said the luncheon gives the organization the chance to build relationships with the community and to make the public aware of its goals.

The program's mission is to help boys become responsible, productive men by developing leadership skills and creating role models among school-aged minority males, McMillan said. This year's honoree and keynote speaker is State Rep. Sylvester Turner, D-Houston. "We also will recognize some of the values we cherish, exhibited by people like Lee Brown and Kirbyjon Caldwell, who have been honored in the past," McMillan said.

#### Program's beginning

Fifth Ward Enrichment started as a pilot program in 1984 with 35 elementary pupils from E.O. Smith, and it continued to expand as pupils went to higher grade levels, finally including high school students in 1997, McMillan said.

"It was basically taking time, going fishing, bowling, exploring what it meant to be a man," he said. "We were there for them. We're still wrestling with how we can have a program that goes beyond high school."

#### Helping thousands

To date, the program has served more than 2,300 families, 3,800 school-aged boys and 275 young fathers. McMillan said nearly 100 percent of the programs participants graduate from high

school. About 70 percent of those students go on to higher education, either college or technical training schools.

Jarrold Meadows is an 18-year-old graduating senior from Barbara Johnson High School who spends 15 to 20 hours a week volunteering as a peer health educator with the program. It is work he will continue even after he begins his freshman year at Texas Southern University in the fall, he said.

Donell Frazier is a 21-year-old art education major at Texas College in Tyler.

A resident of Fifth Ward, he got involved in art while part of the program. He joined when he was 12, and now teaches art to youngsters there during his off time.

Benson Tillman is another product of the program. Now 24, the husband and father works four jobs. He still finds time to speak at Fifth Ward Enrichment events and to serve on the its board of directors. He said the young, black and Hispanic males that the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program reaches out to might not listen to a "balding and gray-haired" man on topics like sex and character development.

But they can relate to Meadows, Frazier and Tillman. And when he looks at them, he is convinced that the efforts of Fifth Word Enrichment have been paying off.

"They could be doing something else," McMillan said. "They are the fruit of a lot of work." Tillman said the program founders deserve thanks. "Mr. Mack, Mr. Savage and the other guys here, the dedication they gave to me, I understand and appreciate it so much more," Tillman said.

### **AT A GLANCE**

What: Fifth Ward Enrichment Program's Heart of Houston luncheon fundraiser

When: **11:30 a.m. Friday, June 9, 2006**

Where: Junior League, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane

Tickets: \$50

Info: For reservations, call 281-213-9554 or e-mail [hoh@fwepinc.org](mailto:hoh@fwepinc.org).

Details: "Visit [www.fwepinc.org](http://www.fwepinc.org)

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