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Media Contact: Laura Turner
Director of Communications
800.354.9338, ext. 2240
Cell: 727.359.6791
ltuner@wedu.org

112,000 VOTES, 400 GUESTS, 85 ORGANIZATIONS, 44 NOMINEES, AND 8 WINNERS

Winners announced for the third annual WEDU Be More Awards

Tampa, FL – WEDU, west central Florida's primary PBS television station, recognized more than 85 non-profit organizations in the area who applied for honors and recognition in the third annual *WEDU Be More Awards*TM, held Thursday, January 17, 2008 at the A La Carte Event Pavilion in Tampa.

Hosted by WEDU, the WEDU Be More AwardsTM luncheon was the kick off to the station's 50th anniversary celebration and paid tribute to outstanding achievement by non-profit organizations – both large and small for 2007. Event master of ceremonies Mason Dixon, host of the legendary Q105 FM morning show and a leading example of community-mindedness throughout the Tampa Bay area for more than 30 years, was joined by Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio, and Editor-in-Chief of FundRaising Success magazine Margaret Battistelli who served as the official keynote speaker. To help commemorate WEDU's "birthday," a few of PBS' most beloved characters also made special appearances including Curious George, Clifford the Big Red Dog, and Arthur. Those special guests, along with almost 400 others from throughout the west central Florida area applauded heroic efforts made every day by the non-profit community and the outstanding achievements of the winners in the following eight award categories.

Be More...Informed: A marketing award for the organization that demonstrated creative, original marketing through broadcasting, print material and/or community awareness campaigns. **2007 WINNER: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (Sarasota).** Nominees included: Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County (Hillsborough), PACE Center for Girls of Hillsborough County (Hillsborough), Senior Friendship Centers, Inc. (Sarasota), and The Pier Aquarium (Pinellas).

Be More...Entertaining: This award honors the organization who hosted a wide variety of special events or one particularly original special event or fundraiser for community benefit. **2007 WINNER: Girls Incorporated of Sarasota County (Sarasota).** Nominees included: Abilities Rehabilitation Center Foundation (Pinellas), Forty Carrots Family Center (Sarasota), Jewish Family and Children's Service of Sarasota and Manatee (Sarasota/Manatee), Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center (Hillsborough), and The Spring of Tampa Bay (Pinellas).

Be More...Brilliant: An award for the organization that displayed the most imaginative, creative, and innovative use of original ideas to achieve organizational goals. **2007 WINNER: Little Red Wagon Foundation (Hillsborough).** Nominees included: Community Haven for Adults and Children with Disabilities, Inc. (Sarasota), Genesis Health Services (Sarasota), Girls Incorporated of Sarasota County (Sarasota), and Operation Helping Hand, Inc. (Hillsborough).

Be More...Knowledgeable: An award which recognizes the educational outreach tools an organization has employed to educate the community through guidance, knowledge, emotional or physical support, and/or a mentorship program. **2007 WINNER: University of Florida 4H Youth Development (Pasco).** Nominees included: Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County (Manatee), Family Network on Disabilities of Manatee and Sarasota (Manatee/Sarasota), Operation PAR (Pinellas), and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Tampa Bay (Hillsborough).

The Community Foundations of Sarasota and Manatee Counties Community Spirit Award recognizes outstanding achievement of a small, "grass roots" non-profit organization located within Sarasota or Manatee counties. **2007 WINNER: Family Network on Disabilities of Manatee and Sarasota (Manatee/Sarasota).** Nominees included: Jewish Family and Children's Service of Sarasota and Manatee (Manatee/Sarasota), and ALSO for Gay Youth, Inc. (Sarasota).

In addition there were three other awards celebrating community support, overall appeal, and outstanding achievement:

Be More...Humble: A people's choice award was decided by an online poll driven by votes from the general public in the WEDU 16 county viewing area. This prestigious award exhibits the connection and relationship the organization has with the community and the people the organization serves. At the close of the 30-day voting window, the WEDU Be More Awards™ People's Choice Poll received more than 112,000 votes. The top five organizations receiving the most votes and nominees for the People's Choice Award were: Aunt Donna's Butterfly Garden, Inc. (Hillsborough), Big Cat Rescue (Hillsborough), Little Red Wagon Foundation (Hillsborough), Railroad Education and Learning Center of Florida, Inc. (Manatee), and Volunteer Services of Manatee County (Manatee). **2007 WINNER: Big Cat Rescue (Hillsborough).**

Be More...Encouraged: An award that is decided entirely by the WEDU Be More Awards™ panel of independent judges without any specific criteria but based on the organization's overall appeal and likeability. **2007 WINNER: Lazydays Partners Foundation (Hillsborough).** Nominees included: Academy Prep Center for Education (Pinellas), Little Red Wagon Foundation (Hillsborough), PACE Center for Girls of Hillsborough County (Hillsborough), Senior Friendship Centers, Inc. (Sarasota), Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Tampa Bay (Hillsborough), The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (Sarasota), The Pier Aquarium (Pinellas), University of Florida 4H Youth Development (Pasco), and Volunteer Services of Manatee County (Manatee).

Finally, *Be More...Unstoppable* the most coveted award of the program. One non-profit group will be named WEDU Be More Awards™ Non-profit Organization of the Year 2007 – selected by a panel of judges from all submitted applications. The award criteria consists of overall excellence demonstrated in the selected category; fulfillment of the four Commitments to the Community, including service to the organizations' constituency, level of community impact, financial viability and embodiment of overall community goodwill. **2007 WINNER: The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.** (Hillsborough). Nominees for Non-Profit Organization of the Year included: Abilities Rehabilitation Center Foundation (Pinellas), Girls Incorporated of Sarasota County (Sarasota), Operation PAR (Pinellas), and Pace Center for Girls of Hillsborough County (Hillsborough). In addition to other benefits, the recipient of this honor receives a \$1,000 community investment grant from WEDU.

While all organizations that applied for a WEDU Be More Award™ are extremely dedicated and tireless in their commitment to their community, the award-winning efforts demonstrated by the winners will be recognized, along with excerpts from the ceremony, on the WEDU Be More Awards™ *Be More Inspired* one-hour television special premiering on WEDU Thursday, February 21st at 9:00 pm.

A nationally-recognized, award-winning program, The WEDU Be More Awards™ generates awareness for non-profit organizations and celebrates the spirit of goodwill throughout the community. The WEDU Be More Awards™ have received national attention through a prestigious "Academy Awards® like" approach in honoring charities. PBS, based in Washington, D.C., recently took notice of this innovative program and has since employed WEDU to assist in the distribution of the "Be More Awards" program nationally. The first PBS station to host the event outside of Florida is KAET based in Phoenix; the inaugural "KAET Be More Awards" will be held May 14, 2008.

WEDU partners with many cultural and educational institutions in west central Florida to bring the arts, education and culture to its television audiences and members, and enrich and inspire the community it serves.

page four
And the Winners Are

For more information about the WEDU Be More Awards™ and other special events, programming, outreach efforts and community partnerships visit wedu.org. WEDU, a 501(c)(3) organization, is West Central Florida's primary PBS station serving 16 counties including the Tampa, St. Petersburg, Pasco, Polk and Sarasota areas through multiple media platforms including on-air broadcasting and online experiences. WEDU, recently awarded its second consecutive four-star national rating by Charity Navigator, is financially supported by its local community, and provides the highest quality educational, informational, and entertainment programming.

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