



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CHARITIES REENERGIZED FOR NEW YEAR DURING  
THE FIFTH ANNUAL WEDU BE MORE AWARDS™**  
*Winners Announced for the “Academy Awards® for Nonprofits”*

**Tampa, FL** – Last year almost everyone faced economic challenges – and particularly those nonprofit organizations that serve the community’s most needy or contribute to the cultural spirit of its citizens. But today, great stories, unscripted moments, inspirational messages and nail-biting anticipation were at the heart of a celebration that has become known as the Academy Awards for Nonprofits. WEDU, west central Florida’s primary PBS television station, recognized more than 70 nonprofit organizations in the area who applied for honors and recognition in the fifth annual **WEDU Be More Awards™** held at the A La Carte Event Pavilion in Tampa.

Hosted by WEDU, the WEDU Be More Awards™ luncheon is one of the station’s premier events and paid tribute to outstanding achievements made by nonprofit organizations – both large and small for 2009. Event master of ceremonies Jack Harris, one of the most well-known media personalities in Tampa Bay, was joined by Cynthia Miller from the City of Tampa who presented the Mayor’s proclamation recognizing January 14<sup>th</sup> as WEDU Be More Awards™ Day; this is the fifth annual Be More Awards Day proclamation made by the City. These special guests, along with keynote speaker, philanthropist and NFL Veteran Ryan Nece and 400 others from throughout the west central Florida area, applauded heroic and valiant efforts made every day by the nonprofit community, and the outstanding achievements of the winners in the following nine award categories.

**Be More...Informed:** A **marketing** award for the organization that demonstrated creative, original marketing through broadcasting, print material, social networking and/or community awareness campaigns.

**WINNER:**

**Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Inc.**

**FINALISTS:** Bok Tower Gardens; Crisis Center of Tampa Bay; Suncoast Hospice; The ALS Association, Florida Chapter

**Be More...Entertaining:** Each year this award honors the organization who hosted a wide variety of **special events** or one particularly original special event or fundraiser for community benefit.

**WINNER:**

**Community Tampa Bay**

**FINALISTS:** Abilities Rehabilitation Center Foundation; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay; The Pier Aquarium; Suncoast Communities Blood Bank (SCBB)

**Be More...Brilliant:** An award for the organization that displayed the most imaginative, creative, and **innovative** use of original ideas to achieve organizational goals.

**WINNER:**

**Girls Incorporated of Sarasota County**

**FINALISTS:** DACCO (Drug Abuse Comprehensive Coordinating Office, Inc.); Dollars for Scholars of St. Petersburg, Inc. / Thrift Store; Lazydays Partners Foundation; Metropolitan Ministries

**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.

**WINNER:**

**Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Inc.**

**FINALISTS:**

Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County; Project Light of Manatee, Inc.; Sarasota Family YMC; United Methodist Cooperative Ministries, Suncoast, Inc.

**Be More...Enriched:** An award which recognizes program excellence specifically for a **culturally-based** organization. This award was **added by the judges this year** to recognize efforts that contribute to the spirit of adventure and exploration, as well as education through the arts, performance or historic exhibits.

**WINNER:**

**Polk Museum of Art**

**FINALISTS:**

Bok Tower Gardens; Carrollwood Cultural Center; Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center; The Pier Aquarium

*In addition, there are four other awards celebrating community support, overall appeal, and outstanding achievement:*

**Be More...Humble:** A **people's choice** award decided by an online poll at wedu.org which is driven by votes from the general public in the WEDU 16-county viewing area during a 30-day period. More than 15,000 [unique user] votes were cast and this prestigious award exhibits the connection and relationship the organization has with the community and the people the organization serves.

**WINNER:**

**Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.**

**FINALISTS:** Little Red Wagon Foundation; Metropolitan Ministries; Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA; The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

**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 ability to **broaden horizons** through creative and respectful means.

**WINNER:**

**The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.**

**FINALISTS:** Lazydays Partners Foundation; Humane Society of Tampa Bay; Liberty Manor for Veterans, Inc.; Little Red Wagon Foundation

**Be More...Involved The Mason Dixon Award for Volunteerism:** An award driven by an online poll on wedu.org with the finalists being chosen by a tally of popular votes cast by the general public in the WEDU viewing area. The ultimate winner of this award was selected by the awards' namesake, local radio personality and philanthropist Mason Dixon, who is not only a leader in his profession, but a leader in the community with his on-air support of dozens of worthy causes and his personal contributions to the Alzheimer's Association, American Cancer Society and Metropolitan Ministries among others.

**WINNER:**

**Steve Franks (The ALS Association, Florida Chapter)**

**FINALISTS:**

Robert Ettleman, M.D., DDS (Gulf Coast Dental Outreach); Michelle Piccione (Dollars for Scholars of St. Petersburg, Inc. / Thrift Store); Phyllis Siskel (Community Haven); Chrissy Turner (Crisis Center of Tampa Bay)

***Be More...Unstoppable*** the **most coveted award** of the program. One nonprofit group was named **WEDU Be More Awards™ Nonprofit Organization of the Year** – 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. In addition to other benefits, the recipient of this honor receives a \$1,000 community investment grant from WEDU – much needed funding for any organization in this tough economic climate.

**WINNER:**

**Girls Incorporated of Sarasota County**

**FINALISTS:**

Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County

Lazydays Partners Foundation

Metropolitan Ministries

The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.

Highlights from 2010 ceremony and interviews with the WEDU Be More Award winners will be featured during the **WEDU Be More Awards™ *Be More Inspired* one-hour, primetime television special premiering on WEDU Thursday, February 25 at 9 pm.**

Created by WEDU, the WEDU Be More Awards™ has become a nationally-recognized, award-winning program and special initiative of PBS stations throughout the country who can best tell local success stories of their unsung heroes, generate awareness for nonprofit organizations and celebrate the spirit of goodwill throughout their own communities. There is no charge for a nonprofit organization to apply for recognition, and the exposure provided by the PBS station throughout the program offers substantial credibility and promotion of an organizations' mission. Additionally, the Be More Awards program serves as a fundraising and community partnership event for each PBS station, also a deserving nonprofit organization in their individual community.

The 2010 ceremony, celebrating outstanding achievements by nonprofit organizations in west central Florida, was supported in part by The Bank of Tampa, Verizon Foundation, A La Carte Event Pavilion and AVSS. **More information about the winners and their award-winning projects can be found on [wedu.org/Bemore](http://wedu.org/Bemore).**

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