



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEDU BE MORE AWARDS™ INSPIRE COMMUNITY

The Spirit of Goodwill and the Celebration of Good Work Permeates through Ceremony

Tampa, FL – A record number of applications coupled with more than 50,000 votes cast online for favored charities, indicates that the fourth annual WEDU Be More Awards™ promises to be an inspirational day for all those who attend the luncheon and televised awards ceremony beginning at 11 a.m. on **Thursday, January 15, 2009** at the A La Carte Event Pavilion in Tampa. Tickets for this a celebration of community heroes are \$50 per person, \$600 for Community Heroes table for 10, and \$1,000 for a Philanthropist table of 10. To make reservations, or for more information on WEDU Be More Awards™ visit wedu.org/BeMore or call WEDU at (800) 354-9338, ext 3013.

WEDU, west central Florida's primary PBS television station, along with a panel of esteemed judges and hundred's of event guests, will recognize more than 85 area nonprofit organizations – both large and small – who have applied for honors and recognition in a number of award categories with one organization being named ***Nonprofit Organization of the Year***. All winners, and excerpts from the ceremony, will then be featured on the WEDU Be More Awards™ *Be More Inspired* one-hour, primetime television special premiering on WEDU approximately a month after the live ceremony.

The WEDU Be More Awards™ have become more than “the Academy® Awards for Nonprofits” (Ernest Hooper, *St. Petersburg Times*); they serve as an inspiration to everyone in attendance. While it's the nonprofits who share their stories of good work; everyone in the audience shares in the nail-biting anticipation of the celebration. No one leaves the event without having been dramatically moved and refreshed with a sense of wanting to *be more* in the New Year.

One of the highlights of the ceremony, the Bank of Tampa *Hall of Heroes*, begins at 11 a.m. More than 36 organizations – everyone nominated for a *Be More* award, is invited to set up a display showcasing their good works; have the opportunity to network with their peers, and discuss their group's goals and special initiatives with the event attendees. In past years, nonprofits have realized increased funding; volunteers and membership through this [free] on-site exposure.

At 12 p.m., event Master of Ceremonies Jack Harris, one of the most recognized media personalities in Tampa Bay, and co-host of the WFLA radio morning show; the 5 o'clock news on ABC Action News and the Mayor's Hour on CTTV, will lead the ceremony which is filled with heartfelt stories from area nonprofit organizations who are doing their best work on behalf of their constituents and community-at-large.

While all organizations that applied for a WEDU Be More Award™ are extremely dedicated and tireless in their work, the award-winning efforts demonstrated by the category finalists will be recognized, and ultimate category winners announced, during the ceremony and luncheon. The four WEDU Be More Award™ categories in which an organization could apply include:

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

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.

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

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.

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

Be More...Humble: A **people's choice** award is decided by an online poll at wedu.org 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.

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.

Be More...Unstoppable the **most coveted award** of the program. One nonprofit group will be named **WEDU Be More Awards™ Nonprofit Organization of the Year 2008** – 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.

WEDU is introducing a new award to the roster during the fourth annual program in January. Inspired by the input by hundreds of Be More Awards applicants, and continued success of the program each year, WEDU has developed an award to recognize significant contributions made by an individual in the community. WEDU is honored to present the first annual **Mason Dixon *Be More Involved – Award for Volunteerism*** to one of the community's most generous volunteers and community philanthropists – award-winning radio personality and program director for WRBQ-FM, Mason Dixon.

Mason Dixon assisted with the launch of the WEDU Be More Awards™ in 2005 and served as the event's master of ceremonies for the past three years. Dixon 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. Additionally, Dixon along with his wife Pat, founded an all-volunteer based 501(c)(3) foundation – the Mason Dixon Christmas Wish Fund, Inc. – which over a 10 year period, has helped hundreds of families in need and has raised well over \$500,000. An interview with Mason will be the feature in a half-hour primetime episode of *Up Close with Cathy Unruh*, an exclusive WEDU production, airing Thursday, January 22 at 8:30 p.m.

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As the recipient of the first annual *Be More Involved Award*, Mason will announce winner of the Mason Dixon *Be More Involved – Award for Volunteerism* at the 2010 ceremony. The award will be driven by an online poll on wedu.org with the winner being chosen by a tally of popular votes cast by the general public in the WEDU viewing area. The poll will include a listing of all community volunteers that are nominated by nonprofit organizations.

Tickets for the **WEDU Be More Awards™** luncheon and ceremony taking place on **Thursday, January 15, 2009** at the A La Carte Event Pavilion are \$50 per person, \$600 for Community Heroes table for 10, and \$1,000 for a Philanthropist table of 10. For more information or to make reservations for the WEDU Be More Awards™ – a celebration of community heroes – visit wedu.org/BeMore or call WEDU at (800) 354-9338, ext 3013. The **deadline for reservations is January 8, 2009.**

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. The 2009 ceremony, celebrating outstanding achievements by nonprofit organizations in west central Florida, are supported in part by the Bank of Tampa; Community Foundation of Tampa Bay; A La Carte Event Pavilion; AVSS and Tampa Bay Metro Magazine.

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. For more information about the WEDU Be More Awards™ and other special events, television 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 fourth consecutive four-star national rating by Charity Navigator, is financially supported by its local community, and provides the highest quality, Emmy® award-winning educational, informational, and entertainment programming.

Media passes for the WEDU Be More Awards™ are available by calling

Laura Turner, WEDU Vice President of Communications

800.354.9338, ext. 2240

or day of event

727.359.6791

For a complete list of all WEDU Be More Awards™ 2008 applicants

visit wedu.org/BeMore