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CONTACT:

Tracie Parker

(323) 960-3500

MediaRelations@ChurchofScientology.net

Awards Banquet Honors Youth Helping Make a Safer South LA

The Church of Scientology Community Center in South Los Angeles closed out the school year with the Stepping Stone Awards Banquet to honor 27 young men and women for their outstanding leadership and character.

"Kids need to learn to survive in the projects," says Bishop Franklin J. Harris, Sr., pastor of Laurel St. Missionary Baptist Church Victory in Christ Ministries. And he would certainly know. Bishop Harris' church is across the street from the Jordan Downs Projects, infamous as one of the flashpoints of the 1965 Watts Riot and notorious for gang violence.

The Stepping Stone Awards Banquet, held at the end of the school year at the Church of Scientology Community Center, marked the culmination of two years of the bishop's "For Kids About Kids After-School How to Make Good Choices Program," to provide youth with useful tools for life that can keep them out of gangs and help them excel in school.

The program features three elements: “How to Make Good Choices” based on the nonreligious commonsense moral code *The Way to Happiness*; The Truth About Drugs drug education program and Study Technology developed by Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard.

“Our kids started out two or three grades behind in school. They’ve pulled their grades all the way up,” says Harris. “I always believe you have to work with the youth. You have to start changing the way the youth are thinking. When we teach them Study Technology and they realize how it works, you can see the smile on their faces. They never had an opportunity to learn before.”

Bishop Harris reached out to other local community groups and asked them to nominate youth age 9 to 17 who exemplify the qualities of being a great student, demonstrating good character and being drug-free—someone who makes good decisions, gets things done, and helps others. Twenty-seven young men and women were selected from those nominated and they were honored for their hard work at the banquet.

Bishop Harris’ goal is to reach today’s kids and create tomorrow’s leaders.

The Ideal Church of Scientology of Inglewood and its Community Center in South Los Angeles were dedicated in November 2011. Their facilities are configured to service Scientologists in their ascent to spiritual freedom and serve as a home for the entire community—a meeting ground of cooperative effort to uplift citizens of all denominations.



Bishop Franklin J. Harris, Sr., pastor of Laurel St. Missionary Baptist Church Victory in Christ Ministries, at "Stepping Stone Awards Banquet" at the Church of Scientology Community Center



Church of Scientology Community Center on Vermont Avenue in South Los Angeles was designed as a meeting ground for residents of all denominations.