

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Former Falcon Gary Burley & Councilmember H. Lamar Willis Support Unprecedented Collaboration To Reduce Cardiovascular Disease Disparities in Atlanta**

#### ***Foundation Launches Healthy Heart Campaign to Tackle Disparities***

**ATLANTA, GA** (February 25, 2005) - Today Councilmember H. Lamar Willis and former Atlanta Falcon Gary Burley joined National Minority Health Month Foundation (NMHMF), the American Heart Association and the Atlanta Medical Association to launch the Healthy Heart campaign, a data-driven initiative, at a press conference at Atlanta City Hall. Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is the sponsor of the groundbreaking effort.

"American Heart Month is the best time to kick off this evidence-based initiative to tackle cardiovascular disease disparities in Atlanta," said Dr. Gary Puckrein, Executive Director, NMHMF. "The Healthy Heart campaign is an innovative and systematic approach to identifying individuals who are at highest risk and strategically implementing interventions, while supporting existing efforts to eliminate health disparities. Our goal is to turn red zip codes associated with a disproportionate prevalence of premature morbidity due to cardiovascular disease into green, healthy zip codes."

The Healthy Heart campaign will target specific "red" zip codes in Atlanta where cardiovascular disease disparities are significantly higher than the national average in an effort to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness. Small grants will also be available to local organizations to facilitate screening events, education, and follow up.

"I applaud this effort to eliminate the disproportionate burden of a preventable illness like cardiovascular disease among communities in our great city and look forward to working with the coalition to find solutions to improve the health status of the residents in Atlanta," said Councilmember H. Lamar Willis, who hosted the press conference at City Hall.

Beginning in March, coalition partners will facilitate screening events at community sites in targeted zip codes identified as health disparity zones - contiguous ZIP codes characterized by a disproportionate prevalence of diseases and conditions that can be linked to higher death rates, greater hospitalization rates and cost. The goal is to collect and analyze health statistics, and, ultimately, to disseminate results to the stakeholders on the ground. At the

screenings, residents will receive educational materials and those at risk will be directed to Morehouse School of Medicine and other health care facilities for treatment and follow up.

"The Atlanta Medical Association looks forward to working with National Minority Health Month Foundation and local health organizations on this much needed collaborative effort to address and combat cardiovascular disease disparities in the city of Atlanta," said M. J. Collier Jr., M.D., Community Outreach Chairperson, Atlanta Medical Association.

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Local and national stakeholders gathered at the press conference to discuss the need to localize interventions in order to bridge the health gap. Among the community leaders who spoke were: Councilmember H. Lamar Willis; Gary Burley, former football player for the Atlanta Falcons; Millard Collier M.D., Atlanta Medical Association; Michael Frankel, M.D., American Heart Association; Larry Johnson, REACH, Fulton County Health & Wellness; Robert Mayberry, Ph.D., Morehouse School of Medicine and Carol Snype Crawford, Atlanta Healthy Heart Coordinator.

The Atlanta Healthy Heart initiative is an ongoing effort designed to mobilize local government, health care advocates and leaders, physicians, medical centers, faith-based and community organizations, and industry to promote cardiovascular disease awareness, prevention, and treatment. Coalition partners include the Atlanta Medical Association, Morehouse School of Medicine, American Heart, Association SE Affiliate, Atlanta City Council Representatives, State Legislators, Association of Black Cardiologists, REACH for Wellness, Fulton County Dept. of Health & Wellness, National Kidney Foundation (Atlanta), Atlanta Diabetes Association, Center for Black Women's Wellness, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 100 Black Women of DeKalb, Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Ben Hill United Methodist Church, Concerned Black Clergy, Southside Ministerial Association, Georgia Office of Minority Health, Georgia Division of Public Health, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, West End Medical Center, Maverick International, and Millennium Filmworks.

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*National Minority Health Month Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that promotes the building of coalitions and evidence-based solutions towards the elimination of health disparities.*