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Two Atlanta Entrepreneurs to be Honored at ITC 's 51st Charter Day and 12th Annual Costen Awards Dinner History Makers and Dream Builders Living Their Dreams



Atlanta, GA (March 25, 2009) Willie A. Watkins and Pearl Boyd Hollis, two Atlanta history makes and business owners who are committed to the community, will be presented with awards on Friday, April 24, 2009, at 6 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta. The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) will proudly present Willie A. Watkins with the *Business Award* and Pearl Boyd Hollis with the *Travelin' Shoes Award* for their outstanding contributions to excellence in helping better the lives of those with whom they come in contact at the 51st Charter Day and 12th Annual James H. Costen Awards Gala.

Both awardees are no stranger to hard work and commitment. Willie A. Watkins started in the funeral business as a 14 year old teenager. Watkins received his state mortuary license by 1971. "I was only 20. I was possibly the youngest to have received such a license," according to Watkins. He worked after school at Thornton Funeral Home in Atlanta, until he opened his own funeral home in 1982.

In appreciation for the community's patronage of Willie A. Watkins Funeral Home, Watkins hosts an Annual Community Day on Memorial Day. In addition to Watkins other community contributions, include his involvement with the Board of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the West End Medical Center. He is also an executive Board Member of

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the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Watkins holds membership in several professional organizations throughout the Atlanta area such as West End Merchants Association, 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Butler Street YMCA, Concerned Black Clergy and the Phi Sigma Eta Mortuary Fraternity.

Award recipient, Pearl Boyd Harris is the tenth of twelve children. This Georgia native and two of her siblings helped integrate McDuffie County School System. Hollis was also the first to integrate the volunteer program at McDuffie County Hospital as a high school volunteer. Pearl Hollis is no stranger to helping others. For over 18 years, Mrs. Hollis has been an active member of Ebenezer Baptist Church. She is also an active fundraiser and supporter of Breast Cancer efforts. Hollis is very proud of her contributions to Common Ground, a support program for individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

Hollis graduated from the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut with an Associate Degree in Office Management. She worked at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia for over 10 years as an administrative assistant to the President. At Georgia Tech, Hollis also counseled minority students and worked closely with programs that helped ensure the successful graduation of minority students.

Pearl Hollis received her real estate license from the State of Georgia in 1984. In 2000, she received her broker's license and established her own company, Professional Reality, Inc. She is currently writing a book on health and encouragement regarding her overcoming breast cancer twice. Mrs. Hollis motto is "If I can get up, I can make it."

The community is invited to join the ITC in celebration along with Mr. Willie Watkins for the (Business Award) and Pearl Hollis (*Travelin' Shoes Award*) at the 51st Annual Charter Day and 12th James H. Costen "Tribute to Excellence" Awards. Other 2009 honorees include: Judge Glenda Hatchet, (Civic and Community Service), Pastor Donnie McClurkin (Arts and Entertainment), Rev. Aaron L. Parker, Ph.D. (Religion), Senator Kasim Reed (Government), Judge Penny Brown Reynolds (Emerging Leader) Mrs. Laura Turner Seydel (*TheoEcology* "Green"), and Dr. A.C.D. Vaughn (President's Award).

Every year the ITC celebrates the 1958 founding of the institution with Charter Day, which created one of the most unique --- ecumenical theological institutions in the world, bringing six different denominational seminaries together all housed under one roof. The ITC in Atlanta, Georgia has been training men and women for Christian leadership and service in the church and global community for a half-century.

The 51st Annual Charter Day and 12th Annual James H. Costen Awards Gala begins with a Silent Auction and Reception at 6 p.m., followed by an awards dinner at 7 p.m., Friday, April 24, 2009, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta, GA. For additional information, contact the ITC Office of External Affairs at 404-527-7718.

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