



Media Contact:
Amisha Harding, Dir. Of Dev. &
Communications
Office: 404.8813293
Cell: 770.823.0640
Email: aharding@cisatlanta.org

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GA Supreme Court Chief Justice and hip-hop artist Yung Joc celebrate kids at Choose Success Awards Luncheon

ATLANTA (May 4, 2007)- Brenda Wood of WXIA-TV, 11Alive News joined with **Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears** and Atlanta, platinum hip-hop artist **Yung Joc** (Block Ent./Bad Boy South) to honor students from Atlanta Public Schools and DeKalb County Schools at **Communities In Schools (CIS) of Atlanta's 2007 Choose Success Awards**. Since 1972, CIS of Atlanta has been connecting community resources with schools to help kids successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life.

For the past two years, the Choose Success Awards have honored individual students who demonstrate remarkable improvement despite facing personal hardship in their lives. Individual student awards went to: Micheal Bryant of D.H. Stanton Elementary; Michael Berry of Bethune Elementary; Angela Mizell of M. Agnes Jones Elementary; Terria Wilson of Long Middle; Sanquan Thompson of Price Middle; Quentin Bryant of Parks Middle; Blair Harris of South Atlanta High; Tempestt Radford of Southside High; Denise Cook of West End Academy Performance Learning Center.

Besides recognizing individual students, Choose Success Awards were also given to teams of Atlanta and DeKalb students who, with the help of CIS of Atlanta staff, were able to look around their communities, identify a need, apply for a small grant of up to \$800, put a service project into action, and document the results. More than 350 students participated in Choose Success service projects this year.

Service project awards went to students at: Columbia High in DeKalb County (2nd place), D.H. Stanton Elementary (tied for 1st place); Sylvan Hills Middle (tied for 1st place), and Washington High (3rd place).

"It feels good to make a difference, said 10-year old D.H. Stanton student, Diamond Kalakango. "Even if you are small, you can accomplish big things." The fourth grader worked with fellow students to raise money to support an end to human suffering in Darfur, a part of African dealing with the horrific issue of genocide. The group of elementary school students took home first place honors for their service project "Dance for Darfur," which raised more than \$600 to support an end to genocide in Darfur.

Emmy-winning news anchor, Brenda Wood, served as Mistress of Ceremonies, praising students at Wednesday's event in downtown Atlanta for their commitment and hard work.

"There's never a shortage of bad news about kids in our communities these days," she said. "But, today we'll see kids who are doing wonderful things and I'm glad to be a part of that.."

Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears of the Georgia Supreme Court urged the young students to commit themselves to exploring the infinite possibilities for their lives.

“Teachers open the door, but only you can choose into which doors you walk,” said the Chief Justice quoting a Chinese proverb. “It is your duty rise to the challenge of walking **through** the door to discover your talents and abilities.”

The first African-American woman on the Georgia Supreme Court, Chief Justice Sears lauded the grade school through high school students saying, “you all, each and every one of you, deserves the absolute best that life can give you.”

On being introduced, Block Entertainment/Bad Boy South hip-hop artist Yung Joc received an enthusiastic welcome from the assembled youngsters and supporters, telling them “this is crazy. I perform in front of thousands of people everyday but today I got butterflies.”

To laughter and applause, he said with a chuckle, “I was just sitting at my table when I recognized one of my fourth grade teachers across the room.”

He congratulated the students on their dedication and hard work saying, “I’m praying for you and I wish you well.”

Prior to the luncheon, Yung Joc greeted each and every student participant at a special meet-and-greet event. “You guys are here today because you are doing great things to improve your performance in school or because you are being of service in your community. I’m proud of you and want you to take your educations seriously and keep up the good work of giving back,” he said to the group of excited students.

When Joc asked students about their community service work, he was struck when a student mentioned that her groups’ service project took place at a local homeless shelter, Trinity House. “Do you know that I stayed at that same shelter with my mother and baby brother as a little boy?” the now successful hip-hop artist asked the group of more than 70 students. The students sat quietly as Joc shared with them that he still has a piece of bread he and his mother received at the shelter. “That piece of bread is as hard as a rock now, but I keep it in a little plastic bag as a reminder of where I came from and my responsibility to give back.”

The Choose Success Luncheon was attended by more than 300 guests including students of Atlanta Public Schools and the DeKalb County Schools, school system leadership, business and community leaders, and a host of CIS of Atlanta partners and supporters.

As the program wound down, Brenda Wood asked the audience, “Are you a little inspired by today? Communities in Schools of Atlanta has developed a great program for these students. Keep doing what you’re doing. It is making a difference. Thank you Communities in Schools of Atlanta.”

Choose Success Awards Luncheon sponsors included **The Coca-Cola Company, Block Entertainment, Publix Super Markets Charities, AutoTrader.com, GE Energy, Wachovia, and Raving Brands.**

To learn more about **Communities in Schools of Atlanta**, please visit:
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