



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS ANNOUNCES SUMMER LITERACY PROGRAMS IN THE SECOND DISTRICT

Freedom Schools, an exciting six-week literacy and enrichment program created by the Children's Defense Fund, returns to Los Angeles County for the third consecutive summer. The program, which begins this week, will host over 460 students ranging from ages five to 17 at seven locations throughout in the Second District.

Established in 1992 by Children's Defense Fund founder and children's advocate Marian Wright Edelman, Freedom Schools provide academically rigorous, quality summer and after school instruction to children. The program is guided by the belief that all children are capable of achieving high standards, and is modeled on the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, in which college students tutored at centers that served as an alternative to Mississippi's underfunded and segregated school system.

The Freedom Schools program includes some summer camp staples such as arts and crafts, field trips and recreational sports, but it also distinguishes itself by a heavy focus on reading instruction and colorful sessions of music and dance. For example, students begin the morning with Harambee, a Swahili term that means "all pull together, during which time they read aloud, sing songs, recite motivational cheers, and then observe a moment of silence.

Throughout the afternoon, students read from a selection of books chosen by a national committee based on the literary work of the country's best writers and illustrators.

“I have never seen an academic program engage and inspire young people to learn the way the Freedom Schools program does,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. “By summers’ end they’ve not only read countless books, they’re set to return to school confident that reading is something at which they excel.”

To date, the Freedom School program has served over 90,000 children in 27 states. In 2010, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas collaborated with Edelman and a group of dedicated child and education advocates to launch the program in the Second District.

Research confirms that Freedom Schools makes a difference in the life of the children who go through the program. According to an evaluation conducted by Philliber Research Associates for the Kansas City Freedom School program, students not only improve their reading skills but gain a love for learning. Similarly, an annual survey conducted by Vital Research based on evaluations from parents whose children have participated in Second District CDF Freedom Schools noted children increased their interest in reading and enhanced their reading comprehension skills.

Los Angeles sites hosting Freedom Schools this summer are: First New Christian Fellowship, First Church of God, Agape International Spiritual Center, Read Lead at California State University Dominguez Hills, Community Coalition at Foshay Learning Center, Read Lead at Helen Keller Elementary School in Lynwood, a collaboration between Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches and Bethel A.M.E. at Bethel, as well as a Freedom School at Stephen S. Wise Temple in Bel Air.

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