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Blueprint selects 2007 strategies

Last year Blueprint for Prosperity, a strategic plan of the Chamber, City of Jacksonville and WorkSource designed to raise the income of Jacksonville's residents, created alliances in each of its foundations to share ideas, pool resources and make plans for future collaboration. While the 2006 alliances will continue to work on reaching their objectives, new priority strategies have also been selected for 2007. Some of these priorities will require new alliances among interested organizations to be formed.

Education

After focusing on mentoring and career academies in 2006, the Education foundation has selected parenting as its 2007 alliance. More than 40 agencies in Jacksonville are currently focused on parenting. Blueprint will rally these agencies together in an alliance to encourage all parents to be actively involved in their children's education, ensure children are prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn and provide training for parents with emphasis on stable families.

Economic Development

This foundation will continue its targeted industry marketing efforts in such industries as life sciences and distribution and logistics. In addition, attention will be focused on attracting and retaining educated young people.

Quality of Life

In addition to continuing work in the health care alliance, the Quality of Life foundation will focus on the following priority strategies: social services and welfare – ending homelessness in Jacksonville; family and youth – encouraging parents, especially fathers, to be positively involved in their children's lives and increasing and enforcing child support legislation;

public safety – reducing the recurrence of criminal acts by people who have been released from prison; and seniors and retirees – providing workforce training for seniors to continue their economic contribution to the community.

Racial Opportunity and Harmony

The Racial Opportunity and Harmony foundation will expand upon its 2006 priority efforts of social and business interaction and the business case for diversity. A priority will be placed on social interaction among youth and adults. This year's efforts will include teaching children to eliminate racism at home and in school, developing an advertising campaign to provide information about the personal, professional and social benefits of inclusion, recruiting ethnic and racial minority professionals and marketing diversity as an asset. The ultimate goal of the foundation is to make Jacksonville "the most culturally inclusive city in America"

Infrastructure

In addition to public transportation, the focus of this foundation in 2007 will be on housing and growth management. Priorities will center on developing affordable housing for low to mid-income levels and redeveloping older neighborhoods in high-poverty zip codes.

Leadership

2006 Leadership priority strategies included leadership training, achieving diversity and inclusion in elected leadership positions as well as those in the private sector and developing an effective communications program that informs citizens of Blueprint progress. To support these strategies, the 2007 focus will be on implementing two leadership development programs, one of which will be a distance learning program.

The Boule Holds its Annual Scholarship Banquet

The Gamma Beta Boule chapter of Sigma Pi Phi fraternity, in partnership with the Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville Urban Systemic Initiative, University of North Florida, and The Dalton Agency, will once again honor the top African-American students in Jacksonville. The High-Potential Youth

Recognition Program, which began in 1986, has recognized thousands of students for their high academic achievement. More than five hundred high school students will be honored at this year's event to be held on May 8 at the Lazzara Theater at the University of North Florida at 7 p.m.

Founding Partners

- City of Jacksonville
- Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce
- WorkSource

New Partners

- Art Center Co-Operative, LLC
- Family Foundations
- Florida Times Union
- Grove House of Jacksonville
- Jacksonville LISC
- UPS
- VFW Post# 1689
- Vision West Incorporated

Total of 323 Partners

Blueprint Partner Orientation

Blueprint staff has been conducting orientations to assist Blueprint Partners in understanding the process and developing strategies. The next orientation will be May 7, 1:30 pm at the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, 3 Independent Dr., Jacksonville Fla., 32202.

To register for this orientation or to schedule an individual appointment, contact Harlan Stallings at 904.366.6618 or harlan.stallings@myjaxchamber.com.

Jacksonville ranked one of the 10 Best Cities for African Americans

The May issue of Black Enterprise magazine ranks Jacksonville as one of the nation's 10 Best Cities for African-Americans, an inaugural appearance notable for surpassing past list-makers like Baltimore, Memphis, Chicago and Philadelphia. At the same time, community leaders including the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce are fighting to overcome the racial and economic disparities outlined in the Blueprint for Prosperity, leaving many residents struggling to reconcile the disconnect between the opposing images of Jacksonville.

Dr. Jarik Conrad, executive director of Blueprint and senior vice president of community relations for the Chamber, suggests the perceived gap between the Blueprint analysis and the survey results leading to the Black Enterprise ranking may become an unexpected catalyst for change.

"The significance of the ranking lies in what we choose to make of it," said Conrad. "Ideally, it serves as a positive reinforcement of our current efforts to improve the quality of life for blacks in Jacksonville. If

we can believe that we are one of the best cities in the nation for African-Americans, then we should feel more compelled to project that mentality as we strive to live up to the recognition."

Black Enterprise will release the next ranking of cities in 2010. In three years, will Jacksonville climb even further ahead? Or is the city at risk of falling behind? Now is the time to look forward to a future when Jacksonville serves as a model for the entire nation: a city that confronted the serious challenges faced by its citizens and responded with a willing desire to take action.

"To be selected by Black Enterprise as one of the 10 Best Cities for African Americans should not be a license for satisfaction or complacency," Conrad stressed. "It should motivate us to take this to the next level. It isn't enough to be one of the best cities for African-Americans. We should be one of the best cities for people of all races and cultures, taking us one step closer to our ultimate goal of becoming the most culturally-inclusive city in America."

Shaping the lives of those destined to shape our community

Since 1919, the Meninak Club has assembled business, professional and civic leaders throughout Northeast Florida to provide a comfortable forum for fellowship, networking and building community. Meninak, which comes from the combination of two Greek words meaning "true" and "honorable," has come to be known as meaning "men in action." Membership is comprised of the chief executives of some of the region's largest and oldest companies, as well as senior officers of newly arrived and growing businesses. Members pride themselves on community involvement and take leadership roles in many of the area's charitable and civic improvement organizations, particularly those that provide assistance to area youth.

The Meninak Foundation, through active support of members of Meninak, has left an enduring mark on the lives of thousands of the area's youth. True to its mission of "lending help where none is available," the

Meninak Foundation's past activities include:

- Building cottages at The Baptist Home for Children
- Renovating facilities at local Boy and Girl Scout camps
- Providing college scholarships to area students

Ongoing signature programs include:

- Annual Charity Project (Since 1934)
- Youth Leadership Grants
- Ocean Marathon Swim (Since 1933)
- Salvation Army Kettle Drive
- Holiday Toy Collection
- Habijax