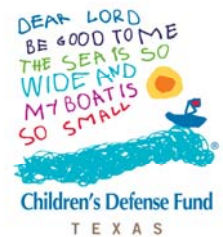


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Children's Defense Fund–Texas Launches Summer 2009 CDF Freedom Schools® Program, Ten Years of Serving Houston Youths** *Program provides literacy and cultural enrichment to youths in cities nationwide*

HOUSTON, Texas—Today, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) kicked off a six-week, tuition-free, literacy and enrichment program for youths in cities nationwide. This summer marks the tenth anniversary of *Houston's Youth Program for Enrichment (H.Y.P.E.) CDF Freedom Schools* nurturing of young minds in the Sunnyside/Southeast community of Houston.

The program is housed at Pisidia Missionary Baptist Church in southeast Houston, from June 15 through July 24. Beaumont and Galveston also operate *CDF Freedom Schools* sites that serve youths in the gulf coast region of Texas. CDF–Texas launched a statewide expansion of the program in 2009.

Established as part of the voter registration and community mobilization effort during the Freedom Summer of 1964, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program aims to provide summer options for children where there are none and to strengthen parent and community involvement in the year-round achievement of youth.

The program serves children ages 5 to 18 for six weeks and integrates reading, conflict resolution and social action in an activity-based curriculum that promotes social, cultural and historical awareness. Parents and community leaders benefit from workshops designed to promote social action and greater awareness of children's needs. A key goal of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is leadership development; that identifies, trains, links and nurtures a successor generation of "servant leaders." The *CDF Freedom Schools* sites are staffed primarily by college-aged young adults or "servant leaders" who are committed to making life better for children.

***"The CDF Freedom Schools program offers children more than just summertime literacy enrichment. The program represents a movement to take back communities, a force for positive change,"*** said CDF Texas Youth Leadership Development Director, Brandi Brown.

***"Children learn from the college student interns who serve as role models and from the program's emphasis on parental involvement that they are part of a caring community. The CDF Freedom Schools program is transforming lives,"*** said Brown.

The program is intended to help students to bridge the educational gap between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. The program begins each day with, *Harambee!* (a Kiswahili term for pulling together), a time of informal sharing when children and staff come together to celebrate themselves and each other.

To learn how to get involved or support the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in Texas, contact Brandi Brown at (713) 664-4080 or [bbrown@childrensdefense.org](mailto:bbrown@childrensdefense.org). To learn more about the *CDF Freedom Schools* program nationwide visit [www.childrensdefense.org/freedomschools](http://www.childrensdefense.org/freedomschools).

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The Children's Defense Fund is a non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for more than 35 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. CDF champions policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education, and a moral and spiritual foundation. Supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations, CDF advocates on behalf of children to ensure our nation always makes them a priority.

The Children's Defense Fund *Leave No Child Behind*<sup>®</sup> mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.