Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center, will deliver the keynote address at this afternoon’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday. Carson’s story is one of faith, family and overcoming odds to become world renowned for separating conjoined twins and endeared by thousands for his inspiring work with young people and support for education.

Born in poverty in 1951 in Detroit, Carson struggled with poor grades, a violent temper and low self-esteem until his mother, who only had a third-grade education, challenged him and his brother to strive for excellence. With hard work and discipline, Carson rose to the top of his class and earned scholarships to college and medical school.

At age 33, Carson was appointed chief of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children’s Center in Baltimore, becoming the youngest person in the country to hold such a position. Carson is perhaps best known for leading a 70-member medical team in 1987 in the successful separation of twins joined at the back of the head. The 22-hour operation is believed to be the first time hypothermia was coupled with circulatory by-pass and deliberate cardiac arrest to spare brain tissue for such a procedure.

Since then Carson has been instrumental in several separations of conjoined twins. In recent years, Carson, with colleagues in Hopkins’ plastic surgery division, has developed a program in which children with congenital deformities undergo neurosurgical and plastic surgical reconstruction.

Named one of top 20 physicians in America by *Time Magazine* and CNN, Carson is the recipient of numerous awards and is listed among Who’s Who in America. He is the author of three best selling books, *Gifted Hands*, *Think Big* and *The Big Picture*. He and his wife, Candy, are founders of the Carson Scholars Fund, which encourages academic excellence in young people.