Dr. Benjamin S. Carson to Speak at Georgia Perimeter College MLK Celebration

Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center in Baltimore, will be the keynote speaker at the Georgia Perimeter College 10th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration, Sunday, January 15, 2006.

The celebration will be held at Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, 2340 Clifton Springs Road in Decatur. Xernona Clayton, civil rights veteran and founder of the prestigious Trumpet Awards, will serve as emcee. The program begins at 4 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

Carson’s story is one of faith, family and pushing beyond obstacles. Born in poverty in 1951 in Detroit, he struggled with poor grades, a violent temper and low self-esteem until his mother, who only had a third-grade education herself, 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, becoming the youngest person in the country to hold such a position. In 1987 he became internationally known when he led a 70-member medical team 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.

Listed as one of the 20 top physicians in the nation by “Time Magazine” and “CNN,” Carson is the recipient of 24 honorary degrees and dozens of national citations of merit. He has written more than 90 neurosurgical publications and is the author of three best selling books, “Gifted Hands,” “Think Big” and “The Big Picture.” Carson has been profiled in a number of national publications such as “Parade,” “Reader’s Digest,” “The New York Times” and “Fortune Magazine.” He and his wife, Candy, are founders of the Carson Scholars Fund, which encourages academic excellence in young people.

“We are excited to have Dr. Carson as our guest speaker. His hard work, remarkable achievements and dedication to helping young people make him an excellent choice for this very important program,” says Jennifer Stephens, Georgia Perimeter’s director of marketing and public relations and the 2006 MLK program chair. “We are sure his life story will be an inspiration to many. Dr. King taught us to serve our fellow man, and Dr. Carson’s life exemplifies service.”

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The MLK celebration also will feature a string ensemble of the DeKalb Symphony Chamber Orchestra and Harmony: Atlanta’s International Youth Chorus. As part of Georgia Perimeter’s commitment to education and community, GPC has teamed with First Book to present a free book to all youth attending Georgia Perimeter’s MLK program. Parents may sign up for the First Book program at the MLK event, enabling their youth to receive free books throughout the year.

In an effort to keep Dr. King’s dream alive, Georgia Perimeter has established the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Awards. These awards are presented to individuals and corporations who honor Dr. King’s legacy through service to the community. The 2006 corporate award goes to Wachovia, Inc. The individual award winners are Dr. Earl and Carolyn Glenn, founders and publishers of “The Champion” newspaper and “Atlanta goodlife” magazine.

Georgia Perimeter’s MLK celebration is one of the largest in the nation, with 3,000 to 6,000 in attendance. Past keynote speakers have included Russell Simmons, Danny Glover, Phylicia Rashad, James Earl Jones, Maya Angelou and Judge Glenda Hatchett.

For more information call 678-891-2685 or visit the website at www.gpc.edu/mlk.

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Cutline

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*Georgia Perimeter College, the third largest institution of the University System of Georgia, serves more than 20,000 students through six locations in metro Atlanta. For additional information, visit www.gpc.edu.*