



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YWCA Greater Charleston Opens 2021 MLK Celebration Registration, Announces MLK Ecumenical Service Speaker

Charleston, S.C. – YWCA Greater Charleston has opened registration for all events of its 49th Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration.

To ensure the health and safety of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic, the nonprofit has transformed this year's Celebration into a primarily virtual event.

2021 MLK Blood Drive

The Celebration will begin with the 2021 MLK Blood Drive on Thursday, January 14. All members of the public of any blood type are encouraged to sign up for slots between 11 AM and 5 PM at www.redcrossblood.org/give using code MLK, and report to the American Red Cross' Bloodmobile in the parking lot of Revelation of Christ Church at 1473 Remount Road at their designated time. Donors will receive free COVID antibody testing.

The Red Cross will ensure proper social distancing and all appropriate precautions as participants help save lives, especially the lives of people of color disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and other diseases.

2021 MLK Ecumenical Service

The centerpiece of the 2021 MLK Celebration, the MLK Ecumenical Service will be held virtually via Zoom at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 17. Members of the public are encouraged to sign up to attend virtually at ywcagc.org/mlk-ecumenical. Virtual attendance is free.

The service will feature Senator Darrell Jackson, civil rights advocate, author, and pastor, as keynote speaker. Jackson, a former commissioner of the Richland County School District, was elected to the South Carolina Senate in November of 1992, becoming, at that time, the state's youngest African American senator ever elected. He continues to serve as a senator for District 21, representing Richland County. He is also the pastor of Bible Way Church of Atlas Road in Columbia, S.C., and the author of the inspirational book "A World of Possibilities." He holds a bachelor's degree from Benedict College, a master's degree from Columbia University, and honorary doctorate degrees from Richard Stockton College, Benedict College, and Columbia University.

2021 MLK Youth Poetry Slam

The Celebration will continue with the 2021 MLK Youth Speak-Out Poetry Slam. All aspiring poets of school age are encouraged to submit a video of themselves reading their poem at <http://bit.ly/mlk-poetry> by the end of the day Monday, January 11.

This year, poems from the Poetry Slam will be included in the televised presentation of the MLK Parade on MLK Day and may also appear during other MLK Celebration events.

2021 MLK Day Parade

The penultimate event of the annual MLK Celebration, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Parade will be held via videos of parade groups submitted in advance, interspersed with live interviews, and televised live on WCBD News 2 at noon on MLK Day, Monday, January 18.

This year's parade marshal will be retired Vietnam veteran and local black entrepreneur Sergeant Herman Allen, who has served as YWCA Greater Charleston's MLK Parade chair for 21 years and founded one of the first parade float companies in Charleston, which he still leads today. Bands, choirs, dance teams, churches, schools, companies, elected officials, and more are encouraged to submit videos of their groups performing or marching at <http://bit.ly/mlk-parade> by the end of the day Monday, January 11.

2021 MLK Summit

The capstone of the 2021 MLK Celebration, the 22nd Annual MLK Business and Professional Summit (formerly Breakfast) will be held before a limited, socially distanced audience at the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau's Camden Room, 375 Meeting Street, Charleston, SC 29403 and live-cast to all other attendees via Zoom at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 19. Members of the public are encouraged to sign up to attend virtually at ywcagc.org/mlk-summit. Virtual attendance is free.

The summit will feature noted philanthropist and business leader Anita Zucker as keynote speaker and City of Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg as honorary chair. Zucker, who currently serves as chair and chief executive officer of The InterTech Group, Inc., is an advocate for education and a

passionate philanthropist. The recipient of the 2019 Ernst & Young Lifetime Achievement Award, 2019 James L. Fisher Distinguished Service Award, and 2018 Ellis Island Medal of Honor, among many other honors, she has served on boards throughout South Carolina and beyond.

ABOUT THE MLK CELEBRATION

The 49th Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration is one of South Carolina's longest running events, predating Spoleto Festival USA and other well-known local events. The annual celebration was founded by YWCA Greater Charleston and first held in January 1972—one of the first such tributes to Dr. King in the nation. The MLK Business and Professional Summit (Breakfast) was added in January 2000 in partnership with former Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. and the City of Charleston. Today the celebration is the largest tribute to Dr. King in South Carolina, attracting thousands of celebrants each year.

ABOUT YWCA GREATER CHARLESTON

For 113 years, YWCA Greater Charleston has worked to eliminate racism and empower women in Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester Counties. Among its initiatives to eliminate racism are its 10-day MLK Celebration, one of the city's longest running events; its annual Stand Against Racism; and its Racial Equity Institute trainings equipping local leaders to address racism. It empowers women with its annual What Women Bring event, attended by hundreds to empower South Carolina's women in business, community, and culture; WE 360, helping women of color overcome barriers in entrepreneurship; Own the Room public speaking workshops empowering women's success; and Choose Well, reducing unintended pregnancies. It brought the first Girls Who Code club for middle school girls to Charleston, and its Y Girls Code program includes female students of all ages. It also hosts SheStrong, empowering high school girls to develop as leaders and changemakers. For more information, visit ywcagc.org.

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