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For immediate release

**Change Happens! Announces Name Change to Civic Heart Community Services
at Annual Spring Breakfast**

One of Houston's Largest Black-Founded, Black-led Non-profit to Build on 34 Years of Community Work

(Houston, TX – April 28, 2023) Today at its annual Spring Breakfast event, one of the largest black-founded non-profit organization in the Gulf coast region formerly known as Change Happens! announced its name change to Civic Heart Community Services (Civic Heart). Held at the Junior League of Houston, the event gathered Civic Heart supporters, including volunteers and donors, program recipients, and staff to hear about the organization's latest accomplishments and what's next for the 34-year-old organization.

Addressing the name change, Civic Heart CEO Helen Stagg referenced the organization's decades-long history. In 1989, Reverend Leslie Smith II founded a 501(c)3 non-profit, community-based organization named Families Under Urban & Social Attack, with a mission "to help people to empower themselves," particularly families and youth at-risk within the Third Ward Houston community. Since then, the organization has undergone several changes as part of several other organizations, including a 2009 renaming to Change Happens!

"Change is inevitable," Stagg said. "Yet, what we know so well from our work, day in and day out, is that change doesn't just happen. At least not meaningful change in the life of an individual or in a community. The clients we serve put their whole hearts into changing their own lives for the better. They face more obstacles than most of us will ever encounter, yet they muster the courage. They stay in action, even when it seems no change is happening, and so must we. For our communities to thrive, we must each marshal the life-giving power of our hearts to have a meaningful impact in our community, one life at a time. We must put our civic hearts, our time, and our money to *work*. Because only then does change happen."

Since 2019, the organization increased its investment in the community by 240 percent and now offers 25 programs in 59 Texas counties through grants and partnerships with a wide range of partners, thanks to its dedicated team of 75 culturally diverse employees and more than 280 volunteers. The organization helps avert youth from a life entangled in the juvenile justice system; enables families to access health insurance; acts to end HIV and prevent substance misuse; helps those experiencing homelessness with housing and other essential support including connection to employment and mental health treatment; provides mentoring to refugee youth as they adapt to living in a new country; and so much more.

According to its 2022 Annual Report, among its many accomplishments, Civic Heart placed 5,800+ youth in after-school and summer enrichment and prevention programs, including mentoring, community service, civic engagement, and volunteer opportunities. Its Self-Sufficiency Program led to industry-recognized certification for 200 adults at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance, connecting 160 program graduates to employment. Civic Heart Health Insurance Navigator Program helped enroll more than 2,180 people in a Qualified Health Plan in 2022 and reached 20 million Texans through Outreach and Education. And, 95 percent of 185 justice-involved girls did not re-offend after completing Civic Heart's nationally recognized VOICES program.

“Today, Civic Heart stands independent, proud of the shared accomplishments of our staff and program participants, empowered to move forward boldly, with intentionality to do more good – for and with people in our community,” said Stagg.

True to its mission, Civic Heart continues its work, grounded in heart-centered love in action to improve and enrich the quality of life for others. The organization takes a holistic approach to addressing the issues faced by people in Houston’s community, meeting them where they are, in honor and respect, to make a meaningful impact and help people empower themselves, Stagg said.

“You helped my family learn to be self-sufficient,” Shanta Beasley said. “Today I am a General Manager of a worldwide food chain and I also own my own food business and catering service. My children all graduated high school and went on to continue to better their lives.”

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About Civic Heart Community Services

Change Happens! is one of the largest minority-founded social service organizations in the Gulf Coast Region of Texas. For more than 33 years the organization has successfully developed and implemented outreach, education, prevention, intervention, and collaborative partnerships to serve marginalized and vulnerable communities. The organization offers a wide array of program and services that includes: education, workforce and employment; after-school and summer enrichment programs; housing and supportive services; substance misuse prevention and co-occurring mental disorder treatment; HIV prevention; teen pregnancy prevention; increased access to health care coverage; reentry program and employment; implementing a resident-driven community plan to increase affordable housing and transportation and mobility options, and enhanced civic engagement to address challenges and facilitate a greater sense of inclusion. Learn more at www.civicheart.org.