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**For immediate release**

**Civic Heart Community Services Honors John Guess III and State Representative Ron Reynolds with the Heart of Service Award during 19th Annual Fall Luncheon**

*Annual Event Raises Funds for Civic Heart's 25+ Programs to Help People Empower Themselves*

**(Houston, TX – Nov. 10, 2023)** Civic Heart Community Services (Civic Heart), one of the largest black-founded non-profit organizations in the Greater Houston area (formerly known as Change Happens!) presented John Guess III and State Representative Ron Reynolds with the Heart of Service Award during its 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Luncheon held at the Junior League of Houston on November 3, 2023. The event gathered supporters, including volunteers and donors, program recipients, and staff to hear about the organization's latest accomplishments and what is next for the 34-year-old organization.

Civic Heart's The Heart of Service Award recognizes and celebrates exceptional individuals whose compassion, selflessness and dedication to service enriches Houston's community and serves as a reminder that we all have the power to create a brighter, more caring world.

Presenting the award to John Guess III, president of The Guess Group, Fall Luncheon Chair Ricky Anderson praised Guess as a dedicated supporter of numerous meaningful causes who approaches his philanthropic efforts with a wholehearted commitment, never seeking attention or credit for his actions.

While recognizing State Representative Ron Reynolds, Anderson commented, "Representative Reynolds exemplifies a true champion in every sense, and he is a tireless advocate for marginalized communities. Ron works day and night to make a tangible difference in our community."

As the main annual fundraising initiative for Civic Heart, this year's Fall Luncheon raised more than \$180,000 to support 25+ programs that for 34 years have:

- helped avert youth from a life entangled in the justice system;
- enabled families access health insurance;
- acted to end HIV and prevent substance misuse;
- helped those experiencing homelessness with housing and other essential support including connection to employment and mental health treatment;
- provided mentoring to refugee youth as they adapt to living in a new country; and much more.

Today, the organization continues to uphold its commitment to excellence in the programs and services it provides, positively affecting the lives of all those it serves. Just since 2019, the organization increased its investment in the community by 247 percent and now offers more than 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. To accommodate its growth, in June 2023 Civic Heart relocated its headquarters to One Emancipation Center at 3131 Emancipation Avenue in Houston's Third Ward.

"For over 34 years Civic Heart has stood with the most marginalized among us," said Helen Stagg, Civic Heart's CEO "We started with just one program, focused on substance misuse treatment, but from the very start, we rarely met anyone with just a single issue. Substance misuse may have led to loss of a job, which in turn led to loss of housing, incarceration, or other adverse outcomes. We knew that only healing and helping the whole person could break cycles of poverty, violence, and trauma for generations to come, so Civic Heart took action and expanded our program offerings to address a multitude of needs, resulting in the development of a comprehensive social service organization that we are today.

"Sustaining our vision and mission over the years was no small endeavor and would not be possible without our supporters, including those gathered here today," continued Stagg. "Your contributions allow us to address issues faced by people in our community, meeting them where they are, with honor and respect, to make a meaningful impact and help people empower themselves."

Mayor event donors included:

- Diamond Sponsor – Comcast
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### **About Civic Heart Community Services**

Civic Heart Community Services 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](http://www.civicheart.org).