



Responding to the Needs of the Community

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Editor's Note: Brief pre-Screening comments will be made at 4:30 p.m. by:

- Tracey Crocker, formerly homeless mother of two
- Rayme L. Nuckles, CEO, Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County

Homeless Father and Young Son's Story Told in *The Pursuit of Happiness*

Pre-release screening for community leaders to raise awareness about homelessness in 40 US cities, including Tampa.

TAMPA, Fla. – (December 8, 2006) – Unless it's happened to you or someone you know, it can be hard to understand how a working father with a young son can become homeless. This is why Columbia Pictures is sponsoring advanced screenings of their latest movie, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, for leaders in communities around the nation, including Tampa.

The Pursuit of Happiness tells the real life story of Chris Gardner, played by Will Smith. Struggling to make ends meet, Gardner and his five-year old son are evicted from their apartment with no where to go. Forced to find shelter wherever he could, Gardner and his son slept in shelters, bus stations, and even bathrooms.

Hosted by the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County, **community and elected leaders from the Tampa Bay area have been invited to attend an advance screening of *The Pursuit of Happiness* on Tuesday, December 12, 2006 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Channelside Cinemas & IMAX (615 Channelside Dr., Tampa).**

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“This movie presents a wonderful opportunity for people to actually witness the struggles and realities a homeless family encounters,” said Rayme L. Nuckles, CEO of the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County. “The Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County needs the help and support of this community to ensure that people like Chris Gardner and his son have a safe place to find refuge and help off the street.”

The current reality in Hillsborough County is that there is enough shelter space for approximately 15 percent of the 11,023 estimated to be homeless in the County.

“Education and awareness is the first step in building community-wide support for homeless people.” said Nuckles. “We are thankful to Chris Gardner for the courage to share his story with the world, and for Columbia Pictures’ commitment raising awareness about homelessness.”

The Pursuit of Happyness opens nationwide on Friday, December 15, 2006.

The Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County is a 501 (C) 3 organization responsible for establishing and maintaining concentrated strategic efforts to develop long-term constructive solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness and meet the immediate needs of homeless people. Governed by coalition members, the Coalition promotes collaboration and coordination among social service providers, businesses, funding institutions, housing providers, state and federal agencies, faith-based communities and other supportive organizations and individuals to organize and deliver, without duplication, support services, emergency shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing to meet the specific needs of all homeless people. The Coalition also operates the UNITY Information Network that “virtually” links service providers in Hillsborough County. UNITY offers integrated referrals, creates a base of data to better understand homelessness to plan effective intervention, and shows “real-time” availability of services – all essential to securing funding to meet the level of need within the community. For more information visit www.homelessofhc.org.

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