

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **New organization ready to fight homelessness more effectively than ever**

Atlanta, Georgia (May 05, 2010) – Every morning, nearly 7,000 people in Atlanta wake up with no place to call home. It is a statistic that is both saddening and troubling at the same time. But there is new cause for hope in combating this vicious cycle.

Representing an innovative and powerful combination of two strong organizations with similar missions, Samaritan House of Atlanta (SH) and Atlanta Enterprise Center (AEC) have merged to become the Atlanta Center for Self Sufficiency, Inc. (ACSS) – a bold effort to more effectively and efficiently fight homelessness in Atlanta.

With its vision to create an innovative, results-oriented organization to help Atlanta's homeless or nearly homeless make a new start, the ACSS merger builds on the strengths, successes, and synergies of SH and AEC. The new ACSS organization will deliver a bigger, stronger, and more sustainable impact to those in need by having the resources and talents of the AEC and SH organizations working seamlessly together as one.

The ACSS will be led under the direction and leadership of Mr. Charles R. Edwards, President and CEO. A strong business leader in the Atlanta community, Mr. Edwards previously served as assistant dean for corporate relations at Georgia State University's J. Mack Robinson College of Business as well as chief marketing officer of the 1996 Paralympics Organizing Committee.

"Today, there is a great deal of competition for public and private dollars", Edwards said. "Nonprofits have no choice but to take a serious look at collaborations with other nonprofits with similar missions. We want to become the 'go to' agency for employment readiness for the homeless in Atlanta."

Fortunately, a number of local foundations are extremely supportive of the new ACSS vision. As of last week, nearly \$1M in financial support has been raised from key supporters including the Robert J. Woodruff Foundation/Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation. Other campaign supporters include The Sara Giles Moore Foundation, Tull Charitable Foundation, Ida Alice Ryan Foundation, and board commitments.

Additional support for the merger was provided by Alston & Bird LLP (legal counsel); Arnall Golden & Gregory LLP (legal counsel); Boardwalk Consulting, LLC (executive search and strategic planning); For Momentum, LLC (marketing and communications); nonprofit consultant Ellen Macht (facilitator); and Dr. Ken Bernhardt of Georgia State University's J. Robinson College of Business (marketing).

ACSS will operate with a singular, highly focused mission; to break the cycle of homelessness by enabling people to transform their lives through sustainable employment and income. Its comprehensive programs and services will be designed to address a broad range of issues – from basic necessities to employment assistance and are tailored to the specific needs of each individual. From every perspective, the ACSS directive is focused on improving the quality of lives in the local community, with merger benefits including:

- \* Enhanced services and delivery systems
- \* Advanced programming and educational training
- \* Reduced costs and duplication of services, streamlined operations
- \* Attracting more financial and community support for growth
- \* Stronger collaboration with other agencies, the business community and civic organizations

Going forward, ACSS will continue to provide all the same services that the individual groups offered, but it plans to improve and expand those services. For example, the one-week job training previously offered by both organizations will now be expanded to four weeks.

According to Edwards, ACSS also hopes to rally the greater Atlanta community to support its cause – particularly as a viable response to help solve one of the area’s biggest issues; panhandling. “There is a misconception that homelessness is synonymous with panhandling, he said. “ The reality is that most people who are homeless are not panhandling. Conversely, most panhandlers are not homeless.” He adds, “ACSS is committed to getting people off the street and helping them access jobs and housing. The community can count on us for that.”

Individuals and organizations who want to be part of this bold new cause are encouraged to contact the ACSS to learn about the many opportunities that exist and/or are being developed to address this important issue.

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