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HOUSTON READ COMMISSION HONORS LIFELONG LITERACY SUPPORTER, MR. HERSHEL RICH

On May 4, 2010 Houston READ Commission will honor Mr. Rich at its Annual Fundraiser: the Mayor's Literacy Leadership Award Breakfast

HOUSTON – When you think of literacy, what comes to mind?

For Houston READ Commission, it is not a “what” that comes to mind, but a “who”: Mr. Hershel Rich is one of the founders of Houston READ Commission and was the first President of the nonprofit organization, which supports adult literacy services in Houston. Rich now serves as Honorary Board Member, and will be honored at this year’s Mayor’s Literacy Leadership Award Breakfast, held on May 4, 2010, from 7:30-9:00 AM, at The Briar Club, 2603 Timmons Lane.

Among the guests expected to attend and support Rich are Mayor Annise Parker, Mrs. Barbara Bush, Houston Independent School District’s new Superintendent Dr. Terry Grier, Houston Community College’s Dr. Mary Spangler, Houston Public Library’s Dr. Rhea Lawson, Council Member Stephen Costello, Council Member Wanda Adams, Council Member Jolanda “Jo” Jones, Council Member Melissa Noriega, Council Member Jarvis Johnson, Council Member Brenda Stardig, State Representative Scott Hochberg, and Consulate General of Colombia, María Matilde Londoño.

Rich will be honored for his tireless support of Houston READ Commission for and his passionate persistence in creating a 100% literate Houston. His major areas of focus have been promoting the use of computers and mass media to teach literacy and publishing the Commission’s pocket Spanish-English Dictionary.

Rich has served as a member of the Governor’s Task Force on Literacy, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and was awarded the Dave White Award for service to the general community. On five occasions, Houston Mayors and City Councils have proclaimed “Hershel Rich Day” in his honor, the most recent of which occurred on April 13th, 2010, when he was presented with a Proclamation by Council Member Stephen Costello and Mayor Annise Parker.

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To purchase a ticket or table at the Mayor's Literacy Leadership Award Breakfast, visit www.houread.org or call 713-640-8202.

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About Mr. Hershel Rich

Hershel Rich, born in Houston, March 1, 1925, recently celebrated his 85th birthday. He is engaged in civic and charitable activities, investments, and commercial real estate operation. He graduated from San Jacinto High School and Rice University with B.S. degrees in electrical and mechanical engineering and was elected to Tau Beta Pi and Sigma Xi honorary fraternities, and was named president of A.I.E.E. and Menorah Society. He served as a Supply Officer in the U.S. Navy.

In 1947, he joined his father, Philip, in the new Phil Rich Fan Manufacturing Co., and on September 7th of the same year, married his University sweetheart, Hilda Atlas. He became President of the company in 1956. The company, which manufactured *Windmaker Fans* for commercial, institutional and residential use, was sold to Sunbeam in 1981. He then started a software development company which developed "SwiftTax," a personal income tax computer program, "SwiftLaw" and "SwiftType." He was a partner in land development companies and commercial properties. He continues to hold several U.S. and foreign patents.

Rich was President of HR Land Co. and HMR Construction, Inc. He is a Director of Friedman Industries (NYSE), President of HMR Consultants, and managing partner of family businesses.

Rich was a founder and, from 1984 through 1987, the first president of the Houston R.E.A.D. (Reading Education and Development) Council to advance adult literacy in Houston. He continues to be very active in this endeavor, promoting use of computers and mass media to teach literacy and publishing a pocket Spanish-English Dictionary. He was a member of the Governor's Task Force on Literacy, served on the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and was awarded the Dave White Award for service to the general community. On four occasions, Houston Mayors and City Councils proclaimed "Hershel Rich Day" in his honor, and on April 13th, Mayor Parker once again honored Rich with this distinction.

He is on the International Board of Governors of Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, a Regional Chairman and a National Board Member of the American Society for Technion. In 1995, Technion honored him with its highest honor—the Albert Einstein Award. He received an Honorary Fellowship and in 1998, an Honorary Doctorate.

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Mr. and Mrs. Rich are Rice University Associates and received the Rice Alumni highest award—the Gold Award—in 2002. They sponsor the Rice University Leadership Program, Rice community service, scholarships, Rice Innovation Awards and Hilda Rich Circle of Giving Awards. Rich was selected a Distinguished Alumnus of Rice. He is a board member of the Downtown Optimists Club, Chairman of The Downtown Optimist Charity Foundation. Additionally, he has served on the board of Great Southern Bank, Congregation Emanu El, Vocational Guidance Service, U.S. O., Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Service, Jewish Federation of Houston, and Texas-Israel Chamber of Commerce. He was Chairman of Houston's United Jewish Campaign, and The Jewish agency in Israel.

Rich is fond of world travel, cruises, boating and fishing. He enjoys playing friendly bridge and poker and serious discussions at MDG (Men's Discussion Group) lunches. For many years, he enjoyed snorkeling, scuba diving and was an excellent water skier.

Mrs. Rich, a Rice graduate with distinction, was very active in the Phil Rich Fan management and owned and operated Rainbow Tours and Travel. She was a director of Citizens Bank Houston and served on the board of Houston Metropolis Ministries. She was president of the Houston Chapter of Brandeis University Women and was on the national board of Brandeis Women's Division. She served on the national board of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the boards of Congregation Emanu El, Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Service, and the Jewish Federation of Houston. She was twice chairperson of Woman's Division of the Houston United Jewish Campaign, national vice president of U.J. A. Woman's Division, and three times a delegate to the Jewish Agency in Israel. She is a member of the Houston Philosophical Society.

Hilda and Hershel have two children: Renie, an MBA graduate of Wharton School of Finance and Sharon, an E.E.D. graduate of Harvard University. Their son, Morty graduated from Rice University with degrees in business and economics, was a CPA and owner of Rich Aviation. He is memorialized at Rice by the naming of the Morty Rich Health Center Building. The Riches are very proud of three grandsons and two granddaughters.

About Houston READ Commission

The Houston READ Commission is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to lead and mobilize a coalition of literacy providers and resources to improve the literacy landscape of Houston.

Established in 1988 by the Mayor and City Council, the Houston READ Commission oversees the Mayor's Coalition

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for Literacy, an association of more than one hundred and fifty literacy sites in Houston. These member organizations, known as literacy providers, strive to eliminate illiteracy by offering educational services geared toward the specific needs of their communities. The Houston READ Commission's goal is to support and ensure providers' effectiveness.

Houston READ Commission advocates for the importance of literacy to the endurance of our city's and our country's economic and intellectual success. Establishing partnerships with the public libraries and the school districts and fostering relationships with the Mayor's Office and all of City Council, the READ Commission demonstrates that supporting literacy in Houston addresses the root cause of low employment, crime, high drop-out rates and excessive health care costs. By sponsoring literacy, these fundamental and influential systems of government, community and civic services support economic growth, help reduce crime, and improve education statistics in our great city.

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