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NEWS RELEASE

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City-County Human Relations Commission to Hold Annual Dinner September 29; Keynote Speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery

(Evansville, IN) – August 19, 2011 – The Evansville-Vanderburgh County Human Relations Commission will hold its Annual Dinner on Thursday, September 29, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. at The Centre. The keynote speaker will be civil rights activist Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery.

Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel will present the 2011 Mayor’s Celebration of Diversity Awards at the Annual Dinner. The awards recognize businesses, organizations, and individuals that embrace and celebrate diversity. Nominations will be accepted through Friday, September 9. To make a nomination, please go to www.evansvillegov.org/diversityawards or contact the Human Relations Commission at (812) 436-4927.

Ticket donations are \$35.00 per person. Corporate sponsorships are also available. Please contact the Human Relations Commission at (812) 436-4927 before Friday, September 16, to make a reservation.

About Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery

Hailed as the “Dean of the Civil Rights Movement” upon his receipt of the NAACP’s “Lifetime Achievement Award,” Rev. Dr. Joseph Echols Lowery has assumed and executed a broad and diverse series of roles over the span of his eight decades: leader, pastor/preacher, servant, father, husband, freedom fighter, and advocate.

One milestone in this remarkable journey took place on August 12, 2009, when President Barack Obama awarded him the nation's highest civilian honor, The Presidential Medal of Freedom, in recognition of his lifelong commitment to the nonviolent struggle for the causes of justice, human rights, economic equality, voting rights, peace, and human dignity. Prior to that, on January 20, 2009, in his inimitable style, Dr. Lowery delivered the benediction on the occasion of President Obama's inauguration as the 44th President of the United States.

His legacy of service and struggle is long and rich. In 1957, he co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with friend and colleague Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He served as SCLC's Vice President (1957-'67), Chairman of the Board (1967-'77) and as President and Chief Executive Officer (1977-'98).

In March 1965, he was chosen by Dr. King to chair the delegation delivering the demands of the Selma to Montgomery March to Alabama Governor George Wallace. As the world witnessed, Wallace ordered the marchers beaten in the incident that came to be known as "Bloody Sunday" which ultimately led to enactment of the Voting Rights Act. Years later, in 1995, as Dr. Lowery led the 30th Anniversary Re-enactment of the historic march, former Gov. Wallace personally apologized to him for his conduct.

Ebony Magazine, in recognizing Dr. Lowery as one of the nation's "15 Greatest Black Preachers," described him as the "consummate voice of biblical social relevancy, a focused prophetic voice, speaking truth to power." He was internationally celebrated and admired for such inspired and bold messages of truth when he delivered eulogies at the funerals of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King.

As convener of the Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda (GCPA), he is active in election reform and voter empowerment, economic justice, criminal justice reform, including alternative sentencing, and a moratorium on the death penalty. He is in frequent demand as a speaker across the nation and on college campuses.

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