



## PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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Attention: Calendar and Community Editors,  
Business, Health Care Writers and Editors

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### **UNITY HEALTH CARE GALA MARKED 20 YEARS OF CARING FOR THE DISTRICT'S MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AND FOR THE HEALTH CENTERS IN THE GULF AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA**

**Washington, DC** – On September 9, 2005, some 525 supporters of Unity Health Care (Unity) joined the leadership of this DC nonprofit organization as it celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of uninterrupted health and human services to the medically underserved in every ward of the District of Columbia. The gala, themed “*Touching the Heart of Every Neighborhood*” was held in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Washington Hotel.

Unity Health Care’s 20th Anniversary Benefit Gala included acknowledgments, dinner, dancing and celebration. *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy served as master of ceremonies for the evening.

Unity Health Care awarded its prestigious *Dr. Jesse B. Barber, Jr. Community Health Care Award* to David Catania, Councilmember At-Large and Chair of the Council’s Health Committee. The Award named in honor of the memory of one of Unity’s founders, Dr. Jesse B. Barber, Jr., recognized Mr. Catania’s personal efforts, leadership and commitment in the field of health care advocacy thus improving access to health care for all medically underserved people, with particular emphasis on the poor and the homeless. In presenting the award, Rosa Grillo Chair of Unity’s Board of Directors emphasized that Mr. Catania in his advocacy, “has always been vigilant of how the city monies are spent - not for the purpose of limiting the expense – but to assure that these services are enhanced and available to all who need them.”

Also recognized that evening was Catherine Harkless who received the *Spirit of Unity Award*. Vincent A. Keane, Unity’s CEO, presented the award to Ms. Harkless, a “truly extraordinarily committed phlebotomist at Unity’s Federal City Health Center, and a founding staff member.”

In commemoration of its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, past Board Chair Charles Barber, son of Dr. Jesse Barber, Jr., and Mr. Keane announced the establishment of the *Dr. Janelle Goetcheus Emergency Fund*. The fund, established in honor of another one of its founding members, Dr. Janelle Goetcheus, Unity’s Chief Medical Officer, was established with a special allocation of \$20,000 to meet emergency needs not covered by existing funds or grants that may arise among Unity’s most needy consumers.

Proceeds from this gala benefit Unity's 24 neighborhood health care facilities and its two mobile outreach vans. Of special significance was the gala's *Rally for Health*, an exciting part of the evening where guests had the opportunity to "sponsor" from among a choice of Unity services or procedures at the level at which they felt comfortable.

Of the money raised at the Rally for Health, 50% went to support the refurbishing or reconstruction of health centers in Hurricane Katrina's affected areas in the Gulf Coast. In keeping with Unity's mission, the Board decided to present two checks for \$10,000 each to the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, respectively. These organizations will assure that funds are used to support the reconstruction of local community health centers in the affected area.

Founded in 1985 as "Healthcare for the Homeless Project," Unity Health Care is the fourth largest community health center network in the nation, offering a full range of health care services regardless of patient's ability to pay. Unity operates 24 neighborhood facilities, including 11 community-based centers, 10 medical sites in homeless shelters, and 3 specialized health centers. Unity's mobile outreach vans travel throughout the city, providing care to homeless persons and "hard-to-reach" drug abusers. Additionally, Unity offers specialized services to homebound senior citizens, medical services to obese adolescents and to students at Eastern High School, medical service to those recently released from prison, and many other services. Unity provides compassionate, quality health and human services to the medically underserved regardless of race, ethnic background or ability to pay.

Unity provides health care services to uninsured, underinsured and homeless men, women and children in the District of Columbia. Last year, Unity provided care to more than 57,000 people, many of them the working poor and their families, who were seen by a Unity doctor, provider or social workers more than 255,000 times.

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*Unity Health Care provides health care services to uninsured, underinsured and homeless men, women and children in the District of Columbia. Unity is a 501(c)(3) organization funded in part by the Bureau of Primary Health Care through HRSA, and by private and local grants, and corporate and individual contributions.*