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Note: All biographical information on honorees is available at <http://www.myy.org/youcanhelp/specialevents/09bhachieversgala.shtml>

**41 Local Professionals Commit To Helping Teens
'Be The Architect Of Their Own Lives'
When They Are Honored as 2009 YMCA Achievers November
20
*Hill Harper to be featured speaker***

On November 20, 2009 CSI:NY star and cum laude Harvard Law School graduate Hill Harper will help the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati honor 41 diverse professionals who share a common passion for inspiring young people on paths of success. Unique to the Salute to YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Gala, all honorees made a year-long commitment to serving the program as a volunteer role model and mentor to more than 600 teens. The Gala will begin at 6:00 p.m. at the Duke Energy Center.

Since its beginning, the YMCA Teen Achievers Program has awarded more than \$175,000 in scholarships, assisted youth with more than \$3 million in awarded scholarships, and engaged more than 4,000 adult volunteers through a network of corporate and community partners. The Program includes college prep and leadership development activities focusing on study skills/time management, interviewing techniques, financial management, team-building field trips, community service-learning projects, college tours and more. It strongly incorporates the Abundant Assets – 40 critical factors for the successful growth and development of young people – and centers around the relationships of adult professional mentors and teens.

"Our Gala is platform for raising awareness about the importance of positive influences on our youth. It is truly enlightening to see so many adults throughout our community who want to be a part of a young person's success," said Toni Miles, YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program executive director.

Harper, one of Hollywood's most prolific actors has a message that fits perfectly with the Gala's theme, 'Empowering Teens To Be The Architect Of Their Lives.' What he shares with those supporting, being recognized and being impacted by the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is his sense of responsibility to encourage and guide younger generations as they build their own destiny. In his books, *Letters to a Young Brother: DeFINE Your Destiny* and *Letters to a Young Sister: DeFINE Your Destiny*, he shares his own humbling life lessons on his journey to an Ivy League education and beyond. Revolutionary in how Harper deals with adolescent issues, he won both NAACP Image Awards and, in 2007, was nominated for Outstanding Literary Work by a debut

author and Outstanding Literary Work for teens. He is a volunteer of Big Brother Big Sisters in Los Angeles and participates in other organizations helping to mentor youth.

Harper's first breakthrough occurred on *Married with Children* and in his film debut *Confessions of a Dog*. In Spike Lee's *Get on the Bus*, he performed his first substantial role as a college student riding a bus during the Million Man March. On television, he starred in *City of Angels* which earned him an Image Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor from the NAACP. He recently appeared on recurring episodes of Showtime's *Soul Food* and guest starred on *The Sopranos*. He has also appeared on *ER*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *NYPD Blue* and *Murder One*.

Reservations are \$100 per person or \$125 with the VIP reception. For more information, the public contact the YMCA at 513-362-YMCA; email tmiles@cincinnatiymca.org or visit www.myy.org.

About the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati: As the area's largest youth and family-focused not-for-profit, the YMCA reinforces character values through assets-based programs and services to more than 143,000 individuals, kids and families annually. Adult mentors encourage young people to be caring, responsible, respectful, and honest through sports, summer camps, structured child and afterschool care, and leadership building programs. Branches offer quality time for families, resources for parents, and a variety of opportunities for seniors to be active. The Membership for All sliding scale fee structure means everyone, no matter their ability to pay, can always benefit from the YMCA. Last year alone more than 17,400 families and individuals enjoyed healthier and happier lives because generous partners helped the YMCA in its vision to be accessible to all.

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