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Media Advisory: Invitation-only ceremony

**DENZEL WASHINGTON'S HOMETOWN HOSTS AWARDING OF SCHOLARSHIPS BEARING
WASHINGTON FAMILY NAME**

*This year's Pauletta and Denzel Washington Family Scholar in Neuroscience Awards will be presented
in Mount Vernon, N.Y.*

LOS ANGELES (April 29, 2008) – Pauletta and Denzel Washington will present two research scholarships Friday, May 2, at Mount Vernon High School in Denzel's hometown of Mount Vernon, N.Y. The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m.

The Pauletta and Denzel Washington Family Scholar in Neuroscience Awards have been given annually since 2004 by the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. The program provides \$2,500 in monthly support for a graduate-level researcher and \$2,000 per month for an undergraduate. Recipients work during the summer months under the direction of renowned physicians, neurosurgeons and scientists, and prepare a scientific abstract or paper to submit to a national neuroscience, cancer or neurosurgery organization.

In addition to lending their name to the scholarships, the Washingtons take an active role in the program, meeting with applicants and announcing the annual awards. The scholarships are awarded in a different city each year to increase awareness of neuroscience research and encourage students from many geographic locations to apply. The Washingtons said they hope the Mount Vernon setting will persuade students from Denzel's hometown to consider careers in the sciences because they offer the potential to change the world.

Keith L. Black, M.D., chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai, will speak and introduce the Washingtons, strong supporters of Cedars-Sinai's neuroscience research program. Mount Vernon Mayor Clinton Young Jr. and Superintendent of Schools W.L. "Tony" Sawyer, Ed.D., also will speak.

Other speakers include Arthur J. Ochoa, Esq., senior vice president for Community Relations at Cedars-Sinai, and Dwain Morris-Irvin, Ph.D., a neural stem cell research scientist at Cedars-Sinai's Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute. Morris-Irvin, who also is from the Mount Vernon area, conducts research to identify new treatments for brain tumors and neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's disease.

(more)

This year's scholarship recipients are Lindsey B. Ross, a resident of Los Angeles, in the graduate student category, and Debi M. Thomas, of La Palma and Davis, Calif., undergraduate. Ross is in her first year of medical school at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. Thomas is in her junior year at the University of California, Davis, studying neurobiology, physiology and behavior.

Ross, who has participated in several research projects, said she "fell in love with every aspect" of research when she was a student at Stanford University, studying a protein involved in muscle regeneration cell signaling. The recipient of several honors, scholarships and awards, Ross already has established a reputation for involvement in volunteer work and community service.

She also has overcome significant challenges to pursue her dreams of becoming a physician and research scientist and serving communities that are plagued by health care disparities. Not surprisingly, she received glowing recommendations for the Washington Family Scholars program from highly respected faculty who have worked with her in the past.

Thomas has been involved in two research studies at UC Davis. In one, she assisted in formulating tests and speech recognition exercises for people suffering from the language disorder called aphasia. More recently, she has studied the possible neurotoxic effects of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), particularly PBDE-47. PBDEs are man-made chemicals used as flame retardants in a variety of consumer products.

Excited about conducting research in the neurosciences, but unsure which exact path she wants to take, Thomas believes the Washington Scholars experience will help focus her ambition.

Her letters of recommendation include references to a long-time interest in the sciences, her accomplishments as a pianist and artist, her academic work ethic and contagiously positive attitude, and her excellent scholastic record, which she maintains even while taking on a challenging curriculum. She also finds time to work at the Imani Clinic, a free health clinic in Sacramento.

"Great progress is being made in our understanding of the human brain, and today's students will have tremendous opportunities to contribute to this knowledge and create new therapies to alleviate pain and suffering," said Black, who established the scholarship program to encourage students to pursue careers in neuroscience research at a time when many are choosing careers that promise more immediate economic rewards. "Lindsey Ross and Debi Thomas represent the best and brightest students in America and they are role models for their commitment to community and concern for humanity."

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The Mount Vernon City School District strives to become a world class organization which focuses on the progress of every student, one child at a time.