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TWO USC STUDENTS TO RECEIVE PAULETTA AND DENZEL WASHINGTON FAMILY SCHOLARS AWARDS JUNE 24

LOS ANGELES (June 18, 2007) – Although applications were received from as far as Georgia, New York and Connecticut, the two young scientists receiving this year's Pauletta and Denzel Washington Family Scholar in Neuroscience Awards, presented by the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, will feel right at home in the Los Angeles area.

Donald J. Phillips, 27, a third-year medical student at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, is a resident of Pasadena. Henry Wu, 21, who is in his fourth undergraduate year of a highly selective Baccalaureate M.D. program at USC, lives in Arcadia.

Phillips and Wu will receive their awards from Pauletta and Denzel Washington during a ceremony that will take place on the Shreveport, La., campus of Southern University, Sunday, June 24, beginning at 3 p.m. The awards ceremony is held in a different location each year to increase awareness of neuroscience research and encourage students nationwide to apply for the scholarships.

In addition to the Washingtons, neurosurgeon Keith L. Black, M.D., chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai, will speak. He will be joined by Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover, Dr. Ray L. Belton, professor and chancellor of Southern University at Shreveport, Laurance Guidry, president and CEO of Caddo Community Action Agency, Inc., and other area officials, performers and dignitaries.

Louisiana Sen. Lydia Jackson and Carl A. Pierson Sr., president of the Caddo Parish Commission, will present honorary proclamations to the Washingtons.

Donald Phillips applied for the scholarship because he is involved in research to develop a drug and transport system that will destroy deadly brain tumors (gliomas), and hoped to study under an expert on the blood-brain barrier. Black is highly recognized for his work in understanding and manipulating this biochemical mechanism that is designed to prevent toxins from damaging the brain but also blocks therapeutic drugs. With his colleagues at Cedars-Sinai, Black also directs a variety of other research projects related to brain tumors, including studies on immunotherapy, gene discovery and gene therapy.

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Phillips, who received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and a master's degree in public health from Boston University, intends to become an academic neurological surgeon. To that end, he has taken on research projects, taught, tutored, led study groups, assumed leadership roles in campus clubs and committees, and assisted the medical school's admissions committee by interviewing candidates.

He was highly recommended for the scholarship by USC medical school faculty members who have worked with him. "Don has impressed me with his extraordinary character and depth of concern for others, as well as his leadership skills and personal commitment to the advancement of medicine through the neurosciences," one professor said. "His research within the field of neurosciences may ultimately contribute to the development of newer drug therapies for the treatment of glioblastomas. His excitement and enthusiasm for contributing to the advancement of medicine within his chosen field of study is absolutely inspiring."

According to Henry Wu's letters of recommendation, he is as gifted in writing and literature as he is in science. One professor estimated Wu to be in the top five percent of students he has taught at USC, saying, "Best of all, Henry strikes me as the rare type of young scholar who has the curiosity and intelligence to study the workings of the mind from more than one perspective – or through art as well as science, and through human interaction as well as through laboratory research."

Another wrote, "Henry is exceptional, and is one of the most intellectually gifted young men that I have had the pleasure of teaching. However, what is most special about Henry is that he is the nicest, most genuine, and kindest individual that you will ever meet. He has a heart of gold, and he is a genuine seeker of truth. He thinks outside of the box, so to speak, and with his genuine interest in the neurosciences, will bring fresh ideas and a tremendous intellect to your program."

Wu's goal is to become a physician and scientist, and he has worked as a research assistant in a laboratory at USC studying the biological bases of psychopathic, antisocial, and violent behaviors. He has received numerous honor society awards and scholarships, and was accepted into USC's Baccalaureate M.D. program – one of only 25 students a year – which enables students to study any discipline they choose while completing the required science courses for medical school. As a member of this group, Wu is guaranteed admission to the Keck School of Medicine at USC.

The Washington Family Gifted Scholar 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 respected physicians, neurosurgeons and scientists, and prepare a scientific abstract or paper to submit to a national neuroscience, cancer or neurosurgery organization.

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Cedars-Sinai's Department of Neurosurgery has awarded the scholarships since 2004. Pauletta and Denzel Washington are advocates for the strength of family and the power of education. They and their children are active in the scholarship program, meeting applicants and announcing the awards each year.

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The first in Southern California and one of only 10 hospitals in the state whose nurses have been honored with the prestigious Magnet designation, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For 19 consecutive years, it has been named Los Angeles' most preferred hospital for all health needs in an independent survey of area residents. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). Additional information is available at www.cedars-sinai.edu.

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