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BROADCASTING LEGEND MERRI DEE HOSTS 9TH ANNUAL MY HERO AWARDS *Honoring Chicagoans Who Mentor Youth*

CHICAGO, ILL. (September 17, 2012) – Legendary Chicago broadcaster and AARP Illinois State President Merri Dee will host the 9th My Hero Awards, the annual luncheon event of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, on Thursday, September 20, at Fulton’s on the River, 315 North LaSalle St., Chicago. The luncheon honors leadership in and commitment to one-on-one mentoring and tutoring.

Admission to the My Hero Awards is \$50 per person and includes an 11:30 a.m. reception and the 12:00 p.m. luncheon. The public is welcome, but you must pre-register by visiting www.lawyerslendahand.org or calling 312-554-2041.

Event Chair Thomas M. Staunton, Miller Shakman & Beem LLP, lauds this year’s recipients saying, “Chicago’s underserved children are at risk from threats unthinkable a generation ago. All of us at Lawyers Lend-A-Hand have their needs foremost in our minds and in all our efforts. Everything we do is for them.

“These very worthy honorees do noble work, and they do it, not just by sitting on a board or attending occasional meetings, but by going out into the community and working every week, every month, sometimes for years, with kids. We know that this kind of consistent

involvement in their lives is the best way we have to give these children a chance to achieve their potential,” Staunton said.

The Chair of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth’s Board, Daniel A. Cotter, Korey Cotter Heather & Richardson, LLP, concurs. “I hope everyone will come out and join us for this event. It is important to the work of all our grantee mentoring programs that we celebrate these devoted volunteers.”

The 2012 honorees are:

Making a Difference Award – Rachel A. Heaston, LAF

Rachel Heaston is a senior attorney at LAF (formerly the Legal Assistance Foundation) who focuses on helping children and families. The Loyola Law School graduate is a 2007 recipient of the Chicago Bar Foundation Sun-Times Public Interest Law Fellowship.

She was nominated for her mentoring of student LaKesha Howard, 17, and for her involvement in the organization Voices International, which matches professional women with girls in the Englewood neighborhood. In mentoring LaKesha for the last seven years, Heaston has become a presence in her life, almost another family member. Together they have read the “Twilight” novels, see movies and TV shows together, and talk on the phone once a week about a range of topics from fashion to boys.

LaKesha told a *Tribune* reporter in March, “Rachel gives me a reason to love being a nerd. She respects my struggles and my problems. She’s a friend, a good friend.”

In nominating her colleague, Mara Block wrote, “She clearly exemplifies the mission of the Lend-A-Hand program to promote best practice mentoring and tutoring programs in disadvantaged communities that foster consistent, long term bonds between adults and youth.”

Making a Difference Award – Steven R. Miller, McDermott Will & Emery, LLP

In nominating Steve Miller, his mentee A’Shonti McKinney wrote, that as a freshman in high school she was intimidated by having a complete stranger take an interest in her life. “I could not always wrap my mind around the fact that here was this lawyer at a major firm taking the time to mentor me.” Steve mentors A’Shonti through the Aim High Program of the Center for Companies That Care.

“Throughout the years, I wasn’t always receptive to his help but he always reached out to me and made me know that, despite the times when I would push him away, he would always be there,” A’Shonti wrote. “He has come to every event, even my dance performances.”

In his law practice, Miller handles employee benefits matters for corporations, limited liability companies, and self-employed individuals. He is a native of Chicago and earned his bachelors degree from Yale University and his law degree from Cornell.

Law Firm Partnership of the Year Award – Freeborn & Peters LLP

Freeborn & Peters has been partnering with Chicago Scholars since 2008. In celebration of its 25th anniversary, the firm was seeking a cause to which it could donate \$100,000. After hearing about Chicago Scholars at a diversity event, the firm saw the opportunity to help low-income, college-bound students.

The firm did more than contribute money. As the lawyers at Freeborn learned more about Chicago Scholars, their involvement grew. Freeborn hosts Chicago Scholars interview sessions, providing space, dinners, and volunteers from the firm. It hosts kids for lunch and learn sessions and helps in countless other ways, according to Chicago Scholars President Karen G. Foley.

“They model character, generosity, giving back, and hard work and show our scholars how important they are. I’ve heard it said that it’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to

be nice. Freeborn & Peters is both!” Foley wrote.

The Judge Marovitz Mentoring Award – Hon. James P. Flannery, Jr.

In addition to the three honorees working with mentoring programs, Lend-A-Hand presents an award each year in honor of one of its early supporters, the late Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz. Judge Flannery was elected to the bench in 1988 and has served in the Law Division of the Cook County Circuit Court since 1997.

Judge E. Kenneth Wright, Jr., Presiding Judge of the First Municipal Division and former President of The Chicago Bar Association, speaks highly of Judge Flannery’s support of his fellow members of the bench. By mentoring others without need for recognition or public acknowledgement, Judge Flannery embodies the true spirit of the Marovitz legacy.