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**2010 BLACK TIE DINNER ANNOUNCES REV. CAROL WEST
WILL RECEIVE KUCHLING HUMANITARIAN AWARD**

Dallas, Texas (May 28, 2010) — Rev. Carol West — a former school teacher who worked as a chaplain in the early days of the AIDS crisis and today pastors the growing Celebration Community Church in Fort Worth — will receive this year’s Kuchling Humanitarian Award, co-chairs of the 2010 Black Tie Dinner announced today. The 29th annual Black Tie Dinner will be held on Saturday evening, November 6, 2010, at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel.

The Kuchling Humanitarian Award, presented each year at Black Tie Dinner, is given to individuals who have made extraordinary gifts of their time and talents on behalf of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. The award is named in honor of the late Raymond Kuchling, a leading activist in Dallas’ GLBT community, former Manager of Economic Development for the city of Dallas, and an original founder of the organization that has become Black Tie Dinner, Inc.

“I’m very excited and honored. It was really kind of a shock when I found out about the award,” West said this week. “I knew Ray (Kuchling) personally, so that makes it more of an extra-special honor.”

West acknowledged the previous winners of the Kuchling Award, several of whom she knows and has worked alongside in the GLBT community “The common thread that runs through all of these great and wonderful people who have won this award in the past is that every one of them has worked selflessly and has lifted others up on their shoulders.”

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“It will be an honor to present the prestigious Kuchling Humanitarian Award to Rev. West this fall,” said Black Tie Dinner Co-Chair Ron Guillard. “Rev. West has embraced the GLBT community in Dallas-Fort Worth, and the community has embraced her.,” he said. “So many times, Carol has stepped in and provided much-needed help when no one else was willing. Countless times she has been there to speak for us, to counsel us, to comfort us, to laugh with us.”

West, formerly a high school English teacher for 17 years, has served as executive director of United Way-funded suicide prevention hotline in Tarrant County and worked at other social service agencies in Dallas-Fort Worth.

Moving from the education field to the ministry was a natural transition for West. “Back then, teaching was very different and I felt I was living a double life. I loved my students and I loved teaching, but I also felt called to ministry. I knew I could not do both,” she said. “I think of my ministry today as a different type of teaching.”

Starting as a student clergy in 1986, West served on the staff of Cathedral of Hope in Dallas from 1990-1996. Working as an AIDS chaplain, she was at the forefront of the battle against a disease that few people understood.

“I was working in AIDS ministry back when it was called GRIDS – gay-related immune deficiency syndrome. In those days, we didn’t know much about this disease. There was a lot of fear, a lot of rumor, and very little knowledge,” she said.

“In the early days of the crisis, it was not uncommon for trays of food to be left outside the doors of AIDS patients who were hospitalized. We would pick up the trays and feed the patients,” she said. “The nurses weren’t homophobic, they just didn’t know much about this disease and were scared, understandably.”

“Ambulance drivers weren’t willing to transport AIDS patients, and many, many churches were unwilling to conduct funerals for people who had died of AIDS,” West recalled. “It was a tough, scary time. But everyone pitched in to do what we could. And as a result, the community came together like never before.”

In August of 1998, West joined Celebration Community Church as pastor, helping to grow the Fort Worth congregation from “35 wonderful people” to more than 500 today. “Together, through God, we’ve

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built the largest LGBT church in Tarrant County, but more importantly, we've built a community where people love one another and truly care about each other.”

Celebration Community Church, located in Fort Worth's Medical District, serves as a hub for the GLBT community in Tarrant County. On a given evening, as many as four community groups are holding meetings and activities in the church's facilities, which are provided free of charge.

In the past year, West has become active in Fairness Fort Worth, an organization formed after police activity at a Fort Worth gay bar. “I've had the wonderful opportunity to be a part of Fairness Fort Worth and to meet so many people who do so much for the LGBT community in Tarrant County,” she said.

Black Tie Dinner Co-Chair Nan Arnold said: “There's rarely an event in Dallas-Fort Worth where Carol West isn't present. Her connection with our community is strong and sincere. Carol truly loves people — all people — and she has a stellar history of going above and beyond to lift people and make all of us stronger as a result. The Black Tie Dinner Board of Directors could not have chosen a person to better personify our 2010 theme – StandStrong.”

Previous winners of the Kuchling Humanitarian Award are:

John Thomas, 1983

James Richard Weaver, Jr., 1984

Donald Floyd Baker, 1985

William Harvey Nelson, Jr., 1986

Michael David Grossman, 1987

Michael Raymond Merdian, 1988

Charlotte Taft, 1989

William Warren Waybourn, 1990

Vivienne Armstrong / Louis Young & Raymond Maurice Kuchling, 1991

Lory Huitt-Masters & Reed Dana Hunsdorfer, 1992

Mica England & Randolph Terrell, 1993

Carolyn Dunbar & Carl Parker, 1994

Deb Elder & Don McCleary, 1995

Alan Levi & Barbara O'Brien, 1996

Kathy Bowser & Richard Peeples, 1997

Carolyn Hall / Candy Marcum & Jack Evans / George Harris, 1998

Cece Cox & Jack Pettit, 1999

The Honorable Harryette Ehrhardt – Texas State Representative, 2000

Larry Pease, 2001

Becky Thompson, 2002

C. Michael Toole, 2003

Lee Taft, 2004

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Christine Jarosz, 2005
Jay Oppenheimer, 2006
Roger Wedell, 2007
Phil Johnson and Rebecca Covell, 2008
Steve Atkinson, 2009

ABOUT BLACK TIE DINNER:

Black Tie Dinner, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that raises funds for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender supportive organizations through a premier event of empowerment, education and entertainment in partnership with the community. The event has headlined local and national celebrities and leaders such as Maya Angelou, Ann Richards, Geena Davis, Lily Tomlin, Goldie Hawn, Martin Sheen and most recently, Mayor Gavin Newsom.

In addition to the Kuchling Humanitarian Award, Black Tie Dinner presents the Elizabeth Birch Equality Award and the Black Tie Media Award in recognition of positive, increased awareness of GLBT issues in the media.

Black Tie Dinner, Inc. began in Dallas in 1982 to help support the Human Rights Campaign Fund. There were 140 guests in attendance at the first Dinner, which raised \$6,000. In 2009, the Dinner distributed \$1.04 million to 19 local beneficiaries and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. In its 28-year history, the dinner has distributed almost \$14 million.

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