



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Robin D. Stauffer, Executive Director  
717-293-4487

**Two Lancaster County Residents to Receive  
Essence of Humanity Award**

**Lancaster, Pa. (August 26, 2008)** – The Phoenix Academy and the School District of Lancaster will honor two Lancaster County residents through the Essence of Humanity Award Program. Antwain Robinson and Gerarda Shober will receive the Essence of Humanity Awards Thursday, August 28, 8:30 a.m., at J. P. McCaskey High School, 445 Reservoir St., Lancaster.

The award is intended to recognize those individuals who, beyond the requirements of their work, demonstrate remarkable human qualities including courage, love, strength, determination, and persistence when dealing with adversity. The award also honors those who demonstrate the spirit of caring and provide inspiration to such individuals on a daily basis.

**Award recipients:**

**Antwain Robinson of Lancaster, Pa.**

The Phoenix Academy in Lancaster, Pa., nominated Antwain Robinson for his determination to earn his high school diploma after overcoming severe and potentially life-threatening head trauma and memory loss. Thomas Haley, who personally nominated Robinson for the award, said, “Antwain has overcome personal adversity, shown remarkable courage and determination, and is an inspiration to others who may be considering quitting school due to injury, illness or other hardship.” Robinson persevered through his studies and will return to school in September

with his typical winning attitude of “no excuses, complaints or requests for special consideration,” noted Haley.

### **Gerarda Shober of Reinholds, Pa.**

The School District of Lancaster nominated Gerarda Shober, a district speech and language therapist, for her commitment to the children she serves. Shober handles an unusually large case load of students who are supported by her expertise and care. When given the opportunity to drop one of the areas in which she provides assistance, she has declined because of the level of need and the connection she feels to her students. Luisa Martinez, a special education coordinator who personally nominated Shober, said, “Gerarda exemplifies all the qualities of an effective teacher. She knows what she needs to do to make significant educational gains with the students she serves. She puts the children’s welfare ahead of her own needs.”

### **About Essence of Humanity**

There seems to be consensus that, as a culture, we often can’t identify enough role models. The intent of the Essence of Humanity Award is to elevate the stories of the inspirational role models that indeed do exist in our communities. The program began in 2001 when business and community leaders in South-Central Pennsylvania established the Essence of Humanity Award. The award is presented by participating organizations in collaboration with the Essence of Humanity program’s steering committee, which evaluates the nominations. For more information, contact Robin Stauffer, Executive Director, at 717-293-4498, or visit the website at [www.essenceofhumanity.org](http://www.essenceofhumanity.org).

### **About Phoenix Academy**

The School District of Lancaster established the Phoenix Academy in February 2006 to serve students identified as possible dropouts. These students have not reached success in the regular school setting and are over-age and/or academically behind their year group in school. Students from middle school and high school are accepted. The Phoenix Academy was created as a proactive approach to helping these students achieve and earn a diploma. The students represent a cross section of the district – including average, special needs and gifted students. Some students enroll because of poor performance, others because they were retained in elementary or

middle school, and some because they were socially promoted with little chance of success at the higher grade level. Phoenix Academy employs different instructional strategies and closer interaction with the students and the home to keep students on track and focused. Visit [www.lancaster.k12.pa.us/alternative/phoenix](http://www.lancaster.k12.pa.us/alternative/phoenix) for more information.

### **About the School District of Lancaster**

Established in 1836, the School District of Lancaster is the second oldest district in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The School District of Lancaster serves a diverse population of approximately 11,760 students: 55.5% Hispanic, 22.7% African American, 19.5% Caucasian, 2.3% Asian/other. The District's thirteen elementary schools, four middle schools, one high school campus and two alternative schools are home to approximately 1,620 staff members, including administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff. The nine-member Board of Directors governs District activities with a total operating budget of \$153 million for the 2008-2009 school year.

###