



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**United Way Volunteer Center Honors Peter Thornburgh through  
Essence of Humanity Award Program**

**Harrisburg, Pa. (April 20, 2009)** – United Way of the Capital Region on Tuesday, April 21, will honor Peter Thornburgh of Harrisburg through the Essence of Humanity Award Program. The award will be presented to Mr. Thornburgh at the organization's Volunteer of the Year Event at Beth El Temple in Harrisburg at 7:30 p.m.

The Essence of Humanity Award is intended to recognize 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 a spirit of caring and provide inspiration to such individuals on a daily basis.

**About Peter Thornburgh**

At the age of four months, Peter Thornburgh suffered severe injuries in an automobile accident that took the life of his mother and left Peter with loss of motor skills and cognitive capacity. After a gradual recovery at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh, he was able to return home to the care of his father and brothers. When Peter's father remarried, he and his new mother also would form a bond that continues to this day. With the gentle support of his family over the years, Peter has maximized his abilities and has developed a strong determination to focus on those abilities, according to his nominator Diane Dugan of Ronald McDonald Charities of Central Pa.

“Peter Thornburgh has overcome enormous difficulties with determination, caring, and a good-natured attitude,” she said.

As a boy, Peter would attend public schools in Pittsburgh and later Harrisburg, learn to ride a bike and play basketball, and master public transit. At age 21, Peter moved to a supervised apartment where he interacts with his neighbors, attends church, and enjoys sporting and community activities. He continues to spend time with his family on a regular basis.

For more than a dozen years, Peter has volunteered at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank where he is fully integrated into the workforce, sharing the celebrations, challenges, and heartaches of his fellow workers. Several years ago, in part based on his early hospital experiences, Peter decided to help Ronald McDonald House of Hershey by collecting aluminum pull tabs for their recycling program. For his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2005, Peter asked friends not to buy him any gifts but instead donate the tabs, resulting in his delivering more than 50 pounds of tabs to the center. Over the years he has contributed tens of thousands and continues to receive them from all across the country.

“He is known for his loving smile and concern for children and adults who are sick or disabled,” said Dugan. “Peter Thornburgh exemplifies the qualities we all should possess if we are to be fully human,” she said.

### **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).