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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Robert J. Bauman
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Pérez Named 2011 Winner of Frank P. Zeidler Public Service Award

Antonio M. “Tony” Pérez, a longtime social justice advocate for the City of Milwaukee and underprivileged citizens, has been unanimously selected by the Frank P. Zeidler Public Service Award committee as the 2011 recipient of the award, which honors the life and work of former Milwaukee Mayor Frank Zeidler.

Mr. Pérez, nominated by Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr., will be honored on Tuesday, September 20 prior to the start of the regular Common Council meeting at 9 a.m. in the third floor Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. Media coverage is invited.

Mr. Pérez, the secretary-executive director of the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM), was selected by the committee primarily for his extensive work prior to his position at HACM. In 1991 he founded the Milwaukee Community Service Corps (MCSC), a non-profit vocational training organization that provides employment and education to young adults in Milwaukee. Modeled after the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), but for urban youth, Mr. Pérez began the program to integrate education, life skills and on-the-job work experience in a holistic program of development for low-income 18-23 year-olds.

During his tenure at MCSC from 1991 to 2000, more than 900 participants found jobs, receiving more than \$4.5 million in income, while more than \$7.8 million in both fee-for-service and public works projects produced more than \$8.7 million in value to completed projects.

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Zeidler Public Service Award/ADD ONE

MCSC continues to average 100 young participants per year, and since its inception approximately 2,000 young adults have received job training through the program. In 1996, Mr. Pérez was one of six inspirational youth role models and mentors profiled in “*The Merrow Report: Searching for Heroes*” on PBS. Also, his experience in building MCSC has been extended to national circles in many capacities -- as he serves as a member of the executive committee of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, is a past president of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, and has served as a consultant to the Peace Corps.

Work by Mr. Pérez over the course of 18 years paid off when the U.S. Department of Labor selected Milwaukee for a \$28 million Job Corps Center, which opened in fall 2010 near N. 60th St. and W. Green Tree Rd. The center recently announced that it had reached its capacity of 300 students, who will receive education, job training, and job placement in a new facility that features vocational training shops, academic classrooms, dormitories, a cafeteria, and recreation facilities, much like a closed-campus at a junior college. To date, more than 125 jobs have been created to provide the center’s administrative, teaching, health care, and other services.

Mr. Pérez was also credited with helping the City of Milwaukee win a five-year, \$24 million federal grant to help youth in the city’s Enterprise Zone obtain employment through GED education and testing, driver’s education, soft skills training, job training, and career placement. In the end, the grant assisted thousands of at-risk low income youth in finding employment, according to nomination materials. Also, in 2007 Mr. Pérez’s body of work was recognized by the National Child Labor Committee with the Lewis Hine Award

In his role at the Housing Authority, Mr. Pérez oversees an internationally-recognized agency that ensures affordable housing options for over 12,000 low-income families, elderly and disabled persons in Milwaukee. During his tenure, the agency received or leveraged more than \$265 million in development resources. In 2006, HACM received the prestigious World Leadership Award in a ceremony in London for developing solutions to housing that are innovative and offer inspiration to city leaders around the world.

Chaired by civil rights attorney and activist Arthur Heitzer of the Frank P. Zeidler Center for Public Discussion, the selection committee is composed of Alderman Bauman (vice chair), Milwaukee historian John Gurda, and community members Shelley Bruehling and Jack Murtaugh.

Mr. Heitzer said the selection committee focused on Mr. Pérez’s decades of positive work in the community.

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Zeidler Public Service Award/ADD TWO

“His persistent work and dedication is credited with bringing the federally funded Job Corps Center to Milwaukee, as well as the founding of the Milwaukee Community Service Corps,” Mr. Heitzer said.

“Both of these initiatives address the massive need for jobs and job training for young adults and especially urban youth in Milwaukee. Given the epidemic rates of joblessness and some of the much-publicized (youth violence) events during the summer, it is clear that he has long had the vision to address these conditions with programs that are needed now more than ever.”

The award acknowledges residents whose efforts most embody the values and vision of former Mayor Zeidler. Elected public officials are not eligible to receive the honor.

Frank Zeidler, the city’s last socialist mayor, died July 7, 2006 at age 93. He served as mayor from 1948 to 1960, and continued to be a voice for social justice and public service until his death.