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Press Release

AACC and MICAH sign Historic Agreement

The African American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH) Form a Jobs and Economic Alliance

Milwaukee, WI, September 27, 2011: With the application of two signatures, a new chapter began in the fight to improve conditions in Milwaukee this week. The largest and best known multi-racial, interfaith organization representing numerous places of worship and thousands of congregants and home owners joined forces with the oldest organization representing African American businesses in the metro area to combat what they describe as the immoral disparity in the unemployment and poverty of Milwaukee citizens and that of the surrounding communities.

MICAH and the African American Chamber of Commerce signed a Memorandum of Understanding, forming an alliance. The AACC has agreed to create and maintain a member quality assurance program to train and vet residential contractors capable of doing work on single and multi-family residential properties, small commercial facilities and churches. MICAH has agreed to expose those successfully enrolled in the program to their member churches. The pilot program, called the Certified Professional Grade Contractor Program, will begin accepting applicants in November with an anticipated start date of December 1st.

When informed of the agreement between MICAH and the AACC, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett stated, "The City of Milwaukee is extremely pleased to see the collaboration of these two important organizations, uniting to fight the critical shortage of jobs in our city and unemployment. MICAH member churches, congregations and all residents of the City will have increased assurance that the firms they hire to perform contracting services on their homes and commercial properties will be capable, courteous and professional, while qualified small residential and commercial contractors who employ City residents will have a steady stream of new clients. This is a win-win-win for the City of

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Milwaukee, our business community and our residents. We need more of this common sense thinking to put our citizens back to work, and I pledge to do everything within my power as Mayor to assist in this and similar efforts.”

Similarly, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton stated, “The cooperation between the AACC and MICAH is an exciting combination of people who are dedicated to economic empowerment of the Milwaukee community. I am in full support of this collaboration and welcome their help in addressing the unemployment and economic disparities that cripple our city.”

Randy Crump, Chairman of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Milwaukee, noted that he has long been a fan of the tenacity and drive of faith based organizations. “One of the greatest things about working with true faith based organizations is that they are committed to doing what they view as moral and just, and are not easily deterred by politics, a desire for personal gain or perceived obstacles. There are no ulterior motives.”

The African American Chamber is committed to the economic empowerment of Milwaukee’s black community. The Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope has as its organizational motto “To do what is just” -- taken from the Biblical prophet Micah. Together, they have faith they can make a difference in the lives of many small business owners, their employees and congregations throughout the metro area.

MICAH and the AACC hope this effort will be expanded following the pilot program period. Expansion could include inviting other ethnic and small business Chambers into the program, as well as expanding the referral program to professional service providers, such as architects, lawyers, barbershops and beauty salons and other personal care services.

A copy of the signed Memorandum of Understanding is on display at the African American Chamber of Commerce.

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