

**\*\* For Immediate Release \*\***

Contact: *Las Amigas, Inc. – National Reporter*  
[reporter@lasamigasincorporated.org](mailto:reporter@lasamigasincorporated.org) (email)

***Las Amigas, Inc., Turns 50!***  
***By Brenda C. McCaskill, Las Amigas, Inc. – National Reporter***

Las Amigas, Inc., a national, African American, women's public service organization, recently held its' 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conclave and 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary, hosted by the Henrico County Chapter and the Tidewater Central Region, in Richmond, Virginia at the Sheraton Park South Hotel. The convention theme – “Uniting Pride, Respect, and Dignity” - was the cornerstone of organizational meetings and community events throughout the June 25 – 29, 2008 conference. Said keynote speaker, Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Chair and President Emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), “The news is out about you [Las Amigas, Inc.]... empowered women.”

Empowered women committed to public service, Las Amigas, Inc. - “the friends” - has convened annually for fifty years to further the organization's programmatic thrusts: education, family, health, political awareness, and economic development. Said Joann W. Williams, Las Amigas, Inc., 17<sup>th</sup> National President, “Las Amigas is making an impact in our communities and our voice is being heard. Our 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conclave is a continuation of arming ourselves with the necessary tools to make an impact on humanity.”

Throughout the 2008 Conclave, members engaged in informative workshops led by Dr. Thelma Daley, humanitarian and counselor-educator, and Linda Wilson, Executive Director of Student Health at North Carolina A&T. Las Amigas officers, delegates, and members convened to plan organizational growth and advancement to enhance the quality of life and promote the general improvement of the communities in which members serve across the United States. With chapters serving communities within the states of Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and our nation's capitol, Las Amigas, Inc., a lifetime member of the NAACP, is an affiliate member of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). During the 2008 Conclave, Las Amigas held an NCNW new member campaign that resulted in 48 new members joining NCNW onsite at the Conclave.

In addition to the annual business meeting, Las Amigas has been giving back to communities since 1957. Invaluable hours of service has resulted in chapters adopting day care and youth centers, senior citizen homes, and shelters for battered women and children. Collectively, chapters and the national organization have awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to high school students entering college. In addition to chapters sponsoring service projects including health fairs, teen seminars on drugs and teen pregnancy, and money management, community service hours have been given to Las Amigas, Inc., national partners: Habitat for Humanity, National Kidney Foundation, National Bone Marrow Donor Program and the Lupus Foundation of America, Inc. The organization's signature project, the Comfort of Love, is a blanket project that distributes blankets to provide warmth and comfort to those in shelters.

The 2008 Conclave was yet another example of the organization engaging in public service. This year's Conclave's public service initiatives focused on outreach – global and local. Las Amigas hosted a shoe drive during the 2008 Conclave and collected over 1,356 pounds of shoes which Destined4Success, a company that collects used shoes to be repaired, picked up and will send to third world countries. In addition, 700 books were collected as part of a book drive to collect age appropriate books to benefit Ratcliffe Elementary, an elementary school in Richmond, VA. Said Ingrid Grant, Ratcliffe Elementary Principal, “700 books is the most books ever given to our school.”

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A memorable and motivating highlight of the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conclave was the 2008 Dora R. Mason Awards Luncheon during which a living legend gave an inspirational message, numerous community and organizational awards were presented, and past National Presidents of the organization were honored. The luncheon featured a powerful and insightful message of empowerment presented by keynote speaker Dr. Dorothy I. Height. Said Dr. Height, “Don’t hesitate to volunteer. God has a plan for you.” At the luncheon, Dr. Virgie M. Binford, an educational consultant and motivational speaker, received the Las Amigas, Inc., 2008 Humanitarian Award for her involvement in community service in the Richmond, Virginia area. Clovia Lawrence, news director for Radio One stations ***IPower 92.1, Praise 104.7 fm, and 99.3 & 105.7 KISS fm***, and Executive Director of the Tom Joyner Morning Show for the Richmond, Virginia market, was named the Las Amigas, Inc., 2008 Community Service Award recipient for her untiring community service. Nine of the organization’s seventeen National Presidents were on hand and recognized for their invaluable leadership to Las Amigas. At the culminating Mary Q. Moore Orchid Gala dinner and dance, Mrs. Tara Wilson-McGee, a member of the Newport News-Hampton (Va.) Chapter and the Tidewater Central Region, was crowned Las Amigas, Inc., Queen 2008-2009.

Other highlights of Conclave 2008 included: The American Cancer Society selected to receive the Las Amigas, Inc., \$1,000 National Partnership Award; Bettie McNeill-Long Attendance Award presented to the Greenville (S.C.) Chapter; Lorraine Walker Attendance Award presented to the Red Springs (N.C.) Chapter; Mary Q. Moore Outstanding Chapter Award presented to Whiteville (N.C.) Chapter (1<sup>st</sup> place), Newport News-Hampton (Va.) Chapter (2<sup>nd</sup> place), and Portsmouth (Va.) Chapter (3<sup>rd</sup> place); Dora R. Mason Outstanding Member Award presented to Zeler Raspberry of the Portsmouth Chapter (1<sup>st</sup> place) and Ann Wyatt of the Philadelphia (Pa.) Chapter (2<sup>nd</sup> Place);

In 2009, Las Amigas, Inc., will hold its’ 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Conclave, hosted by the Gastonia (N.C.) Chapter and the Southwest Region, in Charlotte, N.C.

For more information regarding Las Amigas, Inc., visit [www.lasamigasincorporated.org](http://www.lasamigasincorporated.org) .

**ABOUT LAS AMIGAS, INC.**

*Las Amigas, Inc., is an African American women’s public service organization founded in 1957 by Dora R. Mason and Mary Q. Moore. The mission of Las Amigas, Inc., is to enhance the quality of life and promote the general improvement of the communities in which Las Amigas serves and to encourage personal and professional growth and foster a closer relationship among members.*

*Las Amigas, Inc., is an affiliate of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and has national partnerships with the Lupus Foundation of America, Inc., the National Bone Marrow Donor Program, the National Kidney Foundation, and Habitat for Humanity.*

*Las Amigas, Inc., has twenty-four chapters in communities within the states of Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and our nation’s capital.*