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PRESS RELEASE

## **August Wilson Center Hosts 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual August Wilson Birthday Celebration April 25-26, 2008**

***Accomplished Actress Alfre Woodard helps Pittsburgh  
celebrate August Wilson's birthday***

**Pittsburgh, PA—April 10, 2008**—In honor of what would have been August Wilson's 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture presents the 2nd Annual August Wilson Birthday Celebration for the community. The two-day celebration, from April 25-26, 2008, includes free events at the Center's Gallery 209/9 as well as *An Evening with Alfre Woodard* on **Saturday, April 26, 2008, 8 pm**, at the Byham Theater, Downtown Pittsburgh.

Screen Actors Guild Best Actress Award-winner for her performance in the Hallmark Hall of Fame production of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*, **Alfre Woodard** will discuss her successful career in an up close and personal conversation. Lynne Hayes-Freeland, of KDKA TV-2, will moderate the event.

*An Evening with Alfre Woodard* also features a short film that celebrates the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright's life and legacy, a gospel choir performance, and the winners of the August Wilson Poetry and Spoken Word Contest reading their poems.

Alfre Woodard is a four-time Emmy Award-winner for her lead performance in the television miniseries *Miss Evers' Boys* and her guest-starring roles on *Hill Street Blues*, *L.A. Law* and *The Practice*. She is most recently known for her work playing Betty Applewhite in *Desperate Housewives*. Her many film roles include *Love & Basketball*, *Beauty Shop* opposite Queen Latifah, Spike Lee's family drama *Crooklyn*, and Wesley Snipes' production of *Down in the Delta*, directed by Maya Angelou. On stage, she has starred in Broadway's *Drowning Crow* and *Me and Bessie*, the New York Shakespeare Festival productions of *Map of the World* and *A Winter's Tale*, and the Los Angeles production of *Love Letters*.

August Wilson began his career as a poet and the August Wilson Poetry and Spoken Word Contest invited students in grades 9-12 to write poems about the late playwright's life and work. Out of over 100 entries, five students – one each from Allegheny, Butler, Beaver, Washington and Westmoreland counties – will be recognized on the Byham stage and awarded \$1,000 for their work.

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**Tickets for *An Evening With Alfre Woodard* are on sale now**, and can be purchased by calling 412.456.6666, on-line at [pgharts.org](http://pgharts.org) or by visiting The Box Office at Theater Square. Performance tickets are \$15 and \$30. VIP tickets can be purchased for \$60, and include best seats and a private, post-show reception with Ms. Woodard.

The Allegheny Regional Asset District, Dollar Bank, The Ford Foundation, the Frick Fund of the Buhl Foundation, The Heinz Endowments and The Pittsburgh Foundation provided generous financial support for the August Wilson Birthday Celebration. Other supporters for this event include PNC Bank, The Bank of New York Mellon, Giant Eagle, YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, and the Secretariat for Education for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Wilson was born on April 27, 1945 and died October 2, 2005, at the age of 60 of liver cancer. His landmark dramas, such as *Jitney* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, were part of an astounding 10-play cycle, nine of them set in Pittsburgh, that chronicled the African American experience in America. He won two Pulitzers, for *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*, a best play Tony award for *Fences* and earned best play Tony nominations for six of his other plays.

The August Wilson Center will also hold these free August Wilson Family Weekend programs at Gallery 209/9, 209 Ninth Street, Downtown:

### ***Remembering August (Friday, April 25, 6:30-8 pm)***

Dr. Kimberly Ellis, Rita Gregory, Sala Udin and Chawley P. Williams will share their memories of knowing August Wilson, collaborating with him and starring in his plays.

### ***August Wilson Family Day (Saturday, April 26, 12-4 pm)***

Gallery 209/9 will be open to the community to celebrate August Wilson's birthday. Offerings include art-making activities, storytelling by Temujin the Storyteller and birthday cake.

For more information, visit [AugustWilsonCenter.org](http://AugustWilsonCenter.org) or call 412.258.2700.

**FOR MEDIA ONLY:** If interested in interviewing **Alfre Woodard**, please contact Treshea N. Wade, Manager of Communications, as soon as possible at 412.258.2692 or [TWade@AugustWilsonCenter.org](mailto:TWade@AugustWilsonCenter.org).

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### **About the August Wilson Center for African American Culture**

The August Wilson Center for African American Culture preserves, presents and interprets the art, culture and history of African Americans in western Pennsylvania and people of African descent throughout the world. The Center realizes its mission through an engaging schedule of visual and performing arts presentations as well as historical, educational and public programs.

The Center is involved in a \$35.9 million Capital Campaign to build a new facility located at Liberty Avenue, Tenth Street and William Penn Place in Pittsburgh's Downtown. More than a museum, the multidisciplinary cultural center will be reflective of all aspects of African American culture. Opening in spring 2009, the Center's striking, two-story, green building will house exhibition galleries, a 479-seat theater for performances in all disciplines, an education center, a café and gift shop, and multipurpose spaces for community programs and events. More information is available on the Center's Web site at [www.AugustWilsonCenter.org](http://www.AugustWilsonCenter.org) and by calling 412.258.2700.