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PRESS RELEASE

**August Wilson Center Receives \$50,000 Grant
to Create Oral History Project**

PITTSBURGH, PA—December 21, 2007—Community Connections—an initiative of Pittsburgh 250 administered by The Sprout Fund—awarded \$50,000 to the August Wilson Center for African American Culture for the collection of oral histories of the region’s legendary Black artists.

“We are honored to be given this opportunity by Community Connections to ensure the voices of this region’s great African American artists—past and present—will always be heard in our new Center,” said **Neil Barclay**, President and CEO of the August Wilson Center. “To receive this grant and be recognized from such a competitive field of applicants is truly rewarding.”

Pittsburgh 250 Community Connections representatives announced the award December 19 at a ceremony held at the Regional Enterprise Tower, Downtown.

Community Connections received 235 regional project funding requests from organizations throughout 14 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Only 12 initiatives were selected and named Pittsburgh 250 Regional Community Connections projects. The August Wilson Center received \$50,000—the maximum amount awarded to a single regional project.

To create its winning project, **Civil Rites: Oral Histories of Two Generations of Pittsburgh Artists**, the August Wilson Center will collect the work and personal stories of local artists of African descent for a multimedia presentation that will coincide with the dedication of the Center’s new \$35.9 million facility currently under construction. The project is expected to be part of a permanent exhibit.

“Community Connections’ support will enable the August Wilson Center to bring permanent exposure to the rich African American cultural legacy found right here in western Pennsylvania. This project echoes our mission to preserve, present and interpret the art, culture and history of people of African descent in this region and throughout the world,” said **Shay Wafer**, the Center’s new Vice President of Programs.

“This award will spur us to continue to find even more innovative ways to make certain that the work and personal stories of local African American artists are never forgotten,” Wafer added.

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The Pittsburgh 250 Regional Community Connections Projects are 12 compelling initiatives that affect large audiences, leave a lasting impact on communities, and contribute to the "pride and progress" of southwestern Pennsylvania. A 33-member panel of regional leaders that included representatives from 14 counties made the award decisions.

Community Connections also awarded a total of \$420,000 to 88 grassroots projects, with most receiving the maximum award of \$5,000. In total, this initiative awarded \$1 million for community-based projects.

"The projects supported by Community Connections illuminate the diverse needs of communities across southwestern Pennsylvania. Even more telling is how residents mobilized around shared interests to propose projects that will have a meaningful impact and address many needs in each county," said **George Miles**, Co-chair of Pittsburgh 250 Community Connections and President and CEO of WQED Multimedia.

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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 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 arts center will be reflective of all aspects of African American culture. Opening in early 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.

About Pittsburgh 250 Community Connections

Community Connections, an initiative of Pittsburgh 250, set an ambitious goal to invest in community-based projects that encourage civic engagement throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, and commemorate the region's 250th anniversary through projects that provide lasting value to individual communities and the region as a whole.

Led by The Sprout Fund in partnership with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, Community Connections is an initiative of Pittsburgh 250 and a grassroots community program that complements the signature projects and major regional events occurring in 2008 around the 250th anniversary of the Pittsburgh region.