



MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION:

Treshea N. Wade
Manager of Communications
August Wilson Center for African American Culture
Office 412.258.2692
Cell 412.716.8961
TWade@AugustWilsonCenter.org

PRESS RELEASE

August Wilson Center helps out effort to restore August Wilson's birthplace and childhood home

The Pittsburgh Foundation grants \$35,300 for feasibility study

Pittsburgh, PA—January 28, 2008—The August Wilson Center for African American Culture announces today the receipt of a \$35,300 grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation.

The grant will allow the August Wilson Center and Paul Ellis Jr., the nephew of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson and the homeowner, to explore the feasibility of converting Wilson's childhood home into a multipurpose writers' retreat.

The grant announcement coincides with the introduction on **Tuesday, January 29** of a resolution to Pittsburgh City Council providing for the designation of the house as an historic structure in the city.

The August Wilson Center is managing the feasibility study. The architectural firm of Pfaffmann and Associates will conduct the study and issue a written report. Completing the study is a necessary first step in the process of creating an enduring landmark for the City of Pittsburgh.

"We are very grateful for The Pittsburgh Foundation's support. We join with the community in the belief that restoring the home and birthplace of August Wilson is advantageous for the advancement of the artistic and cultural life of Pittsburgh," said Neil Barclay, the August Wilson Center's President and CEO.

Ellis said the grant marks a giant step toward fulfilling his dream of restoring a place that was so meaningful to his uncle. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission awarded the house located at 1727 Bedford Avenue, in Pittsburgh's Hill District, an Official Pennsylvania State Historical Marker on May 30, 2007.

"I have always had a driving desire to make a significant contribution to my community in the spirit of my uncle. Thinking of him and what that house represented to him makes this entire project worthwhile," Ellis said.

next/

August Wilson Center Helps Effort to Restore August Wilson's Childhood Home/Page 2

"Completing the feasibility study is an essential first step for the August Wilson Center to determine the appropriateness and cost of expanding its programming by creating a retreat for writers, which could also become a resource for community gatherings and a landmark destination for visitors and cultural tourists," said Richard W. Reed Jr., Executive Vice President of The Pittsburgh Foundation. "We are pleased to support this important project."

Wilson 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 best play Tony nominations for six of his other plays.

###

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 education 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 and by calling 412.258.2700.

About The Pittsburgh Foundation

The Pittsburgh Foundation is one of the oldest community foundations in the United States and the nation's 14th largest. The Foundation's assets currently total \$724 million, comprising endowment funds, created by individuals, families and organizations with a passion for Pittsburgh and a deep commitment to their community.