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**Youth Offer Inspiring Perspectives on Promoting Diversity in
14th Annual Gardere MLK Jr. Oratory Competition**

Speech competition commemorates legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Houston, Jan. 4, 2010— The 14th Annual Gardere MLK Jr. Oratory Competition will be held at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Christ, 500 Clay Street, Houston, Texas 77002, on Friday, Jan. 15 from 9:45 to 11:45 a.m. Incorporating ideals from Dr. King’s writings and speeches, fourth- and fifth-grade students will compose and present original speeches, not to exceed five minutes, addressing the topic: *“What will I be able to achieve in my life because of what Dr. King achieved in his?”*

Established in Dallas in 1993 by Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP, and expanded to Houston in 1997, the 14th Annual Gardere MLK Jr. Oratory Competition is hosted annually in conjunction with Martin Luther King Jr. Day to encourage the community to remember and pay tribute to the late civil rights leader’s legacy. Presented in the spirit of learning and celebration, the event is designed to highlight the cultural diversity of the community while recognizing and encouraging the writing and presentation skills of elementary school students. The annual competition is presented, hosted and sponsored by Gardere.

“These young orators take the stage with an incredible amount of poise and talent,” noted Claude Treece, Gardere operating partner. “These are leaders in the making. Their commanding speeches bring to life Dr. King’s legacy, illustrating how his words relate to their own lives and to society at-large and compelling us to see how the late civil rights leader’s dreams laid a solid foundation for their futures.”

In-school rounds, featuring a maximum of 20 students per school, were held at the 24 Houston ISD schools from Dec. 1 – 15. The young speakers are judged on the content of their speeches, memorization and overall presentation at all three levels of the competition. Winners from the in-school competitions qualified to represent their schools at the Jan. 8 preliminary competition at Thompson Elementary School, where 12 finalists will be selected to advance to the final competition on Jan. 15.

The 2010 competition has expanded from 18 to 24 elementary schools this year. Confirmed elementary schools include: Anderson, Atherton, Burrus, Cornelius, Crawford, Crespo, Dodson, Garden Villas, Gregg, Gross, Lockhart, MacGregor, Mading, Park Place, Pleasantville, Port Houston, Rodriguez, Sanchez, Southmayd, Thompson, Valley West, Wainwright, Whidby and Woodson.

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Past winners have impressed the community and their peers by commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy with inspiring words. Fourth grader Gerra Gistand from MacGregor Elementary took top prize in the 2009 competition with her engaging speech, proclaiming "the dream is almost fulfilled, and the promised land is within reach," referring to the election of President-elect Barack Obama. Her inspirational speech received a standing ovation after she concluded with a brief passage from Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come," a song of hope for the Civil Rights Movement, singing "It's been a long, a long time coming." Perri Jones, the 2008 winner, impressed the audience by hosting her own talk show during the speech and proclaimed that she could "rise" to be anything – "Secretary of State, President of the USA or even a talk show host like Oprah."

The 14th Annual Gardere MLK Jr. Oratory Competition commences with a performance by the Salvation Army Harbor Lights Choir at 9:45 a.m., followed by the oratory competition at 10 a.m. The first-place winner will receive a \$1,000 savings bond, and the second- and third-place winners and remaining finalists will each receive savings bonds of varying amounts. The competition is free and open to the public.

ABOUT GARDERE WYNNE SEWELL LLP

Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP, an AmLaw 200 firm founded in 1909 and one of the Southwest's largest full-service law firms, has offices in Austin, Dallas, Houston and Mexico City. Gardere provides legal services to private and public companies and individuals in areas of energy, litigation, corporate, tax, environmental, labor and employment, intellectual property and financial services.

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