



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Child Advocate Sharon D. Berry Baker Honored by Cambridge Who's Who

Sharon D. Berry Baker Observes Child Abuse Prevention Month in Newark

NEWARK, NJ, April 14, 2010 – Sharon D. Berry Baker, President, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Project Re-Direct/Youth & Family Services, has been named Cambridge Who's Who Professional of the Year in Community Services. While inclusion in Cambridge Who's Who Registry is an honor, only two male and two female members in each discipline are named the Cambridge Who's Who Professional of the Year. The Cambridge Who's Who selection committee chooses these special honorees based on their professional accomplishments, academic achievements, and leadership abilities.

A veteran schoolteacher and guidance counselor, Sharon D. Berry Baker had always had an affinity for children. That she should be working in a state where child abuse is a serious issue was an irony not lost on her – determined to help, she founded Project Re-Direct/Youth & Family Services in 1996. Focused on the underserved population in Newark's West Side Park, the non-profit organization works proactively to facilitate the restoration of families and prevent child abuse and juvenile delinquency. Ms. Berry performs a myriad functions as its president and CEO, planning events, writing grants, conducting developmental workshops, training staff, counseling, marketing, and fundraising.

Driven always by the conviction that child abuse prevention initiatives work, Ms. Berry Baker has observed with great dismay that present economic troubles have forced cutbacks in programs that provide vital support – law enforcement agents, public awareness programs and family support services, to name a few – at a time when it is needed most. With this in mind, she develops and advocates programs that are specifically designed to work in this recession. Throughout April, acknowledged as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, she will be spearheading public awareness programs against child abuse, which will culminate in the "Children are a Gift" springtime campaign. Extending until June, the campaign will raise funds for the establishment of Project Re-Direct's Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, which will advance programs to fight child abuse, intervene when it is suspected, and support families once it is identified. "There is no excuse for abuse," Ms. Berry Baker states.

A former guidance counselor at South Seventeenth Street School, Ms. Berry Baker is presently the program director of the Education for the 21st Century (EY2K0 Saturday) and summer initiative. This Saturday academy is held at the West Side Park Community Center. Ms. Berry organizes recreational activities, field trips, life skills classes and academic tutorials to bring learning and enrichment into the lives of local kids. At the most basic level, she gives at-risk children a safe place in which to play. The school attracts anywhere between 75 to 100 students every week, such that a local newspaper has dubbed it, "one school kids rise early to attend." Ms. Berry Baker has enjoyed much local support over the course of her work. This June, Irvington Mayor Wayne Smith will be attending Re-Direct/Youth & Family Services' 10th anniversary celebration, an event that will be built around a quote attributed to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "A man has no greater purpose than to serve his fellow man." Last September, Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler delivered a speech at a candlelight prayer vigil for child abuse victims that Project Re-Direct had organized. Ms. Berry Baker considers saving the lives of kids and reorienting them towards healthier lifestyles to be the most rewarding aspect of her career. She dedicates her accomplishments to her family and her own phenomenal teachers.

Ms. Berry Baker received her master of arts in counseling and humanistic service from Montclair State University and her bachelor's degree in English and secondary education from SUNY Cortland. She is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NJ Association of Women Business Owners, and Phi Kappa Phi. Her goals for the next five years include becoming a licensed clinician and pursuing a Ph.D. in organizational development and non-profit management.