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Contact: Dana Baxter/ESSENCE
212-522-1634
dbaxter@essence.com

Sheila Harris/
212-522-1088
sharris@essence.com

**ESSENCE & SOUTHERN COMPANY
PRESENT THE THIRD ANNUAL *EVENING OF EXCELLENCE*
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS**

**SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE EVENT SALUTING INFLUENTIAL
AND ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE WILL HONOR
TOM JOYNER, DONNA RICHARDSON-JOYNER
AND U.S. SURGEON GENERAL DR. REGINA BENJAMIN**

EVENT TO FEATURE SURPRISE PERFORMANCE FROM A SPECIAL GUEST

September 19, 2011 (New York, NY)—ESSENCE & Southern Company, in partnership with Southern Company **Group**, will host their 3rd annual *Evening of Excellence*—a special awards reception at the Black Caucus Foundation's (CBCF) 41st Annual Legislative Conference. The annual reception will honor influential leaders and advocates of change. This year's honorees include: **Tom Joyner**, *Show*, **Donna Richardson-Joyner**, top fitness guru; and **Dr. Regina Benjamin**, U.S. Surgeon General.

Hosted by CNN news anchor **Fredricka Whitfield**, this invitation-only event will take place in Washington, D.C., at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. The event will also feature a performance from the D-Nice as well as a surprise performance from a special guest. The event will also feature a performance from the Luther King, Jr., Memorial Project.

"ESSENCE looks forward to our *Evening of Excellence* each year as we honor thought leaders whose mission is aligned with ours—to always uplift and empower the community in all that we do," said ESSENCE Editor-in-Chief. "All of the honorees have used their platforms not only to raise awareness on critical issues impacting our communities, but also to affect lasting change both locally and nationally. We are very proud to pay tribute to each of our esteemed honorees during this event."

"It is such a privilege to partner again with Southern Company for our third annual *Evening of Excellence*," said Michelle Ebanks, President, Essence Communications, Inc. "Historically, the Congressional Black Caucus has been a time to reflect on the accomplishments of our leaders who are fighting daily for equality and have no voice. In the same spirit, each of our honorees has demonstrated their dedication to their community throughout each of their endeavors. We are so pleased to honor Tom and Donna Richardson-Joyner and Regina Benjamin for their phenomenal achievements and their selfless spirit. We especially thank the Southern Company and Perennial Strategy Group for their vision and commitment to highlighting their great work."

"Every year we proudly recognize several leaders among us who bring positive change to our country," said Lamell McMorris, Founder and CEO of Perennial Strategy Group. "The agents for change in the fields of health and human services, education, and fitness, and our Company and Essence in recognizing them."

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ABOUT THE HONOREES...

Tom Joyner, known as 'The Hardest Working Man in Radio', has distinguished himself as an inspirational, and dynamic media personalities in the country today. As host of the leading radio show, *The Tom Joyner Morning Show*—which features a who's who in celebrities and comedians—Joyner has won virtually every top radio award. Joyner has become a voice for the country. He has led voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, major fund-raising events, and students affected by Hurricane Katrina. This national pacesetter resides in Dallas, Texas and Richardson.

Donna Richardson-Joyner's purpose and passion over the last 25 years has been to educate children, women, and families about living a healthy lifestyle. She has the #1 inspirational book, *Sweating in the Spirit*, followed by *Body Gospel*, which was released in April 2010. She has produced award-winning videos including the best-selling, "**Buns of Steel**", **ESPN**, and **Nike**. She has served on the Presidential Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition under President Obama. This is in this capacity. Donna also was recently appointed to the National Advisory Board of the National Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity. She will serve as a spokesperson to champion the fight against the Obesity Epidemic by 2015.

Regina Benjamin, MD, MBA is the 18th Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service. As a Doctor, she provides the public with the best scientific information available on how to improve the health of the nation. Dr. Benjamin also oversees the operational command of 6,500 units in locations around the world to promote, protect, and advance the health of the American people. She is the Founder and Former CEO of the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic in Alabama, former Assistant Professor at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine in Mobile, and Past Chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta of the United States. She attended Morehouse School of Medicine and completed her fellowship at the University of Georgia. She established a clinic in a small fishing village in Alabama to help its uninsured residents through Hurricane Georges in 1998, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and a devastating fire, in 2006. She raised money to cover expenses. She also became nationally prominent for her business and medical expertise in preventive medicine.

About Essence Communications Inc.:

Essence Communications Inc. (ECI) is the number one media company dedicated to providing a multi-platform presence in publishing, live events, and online. The company's flagship publication is the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African-American women; generating brand extensions including *Essence Festival*, *ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood* and *Black Women in Music*, *Window on America*, a consumer insights series, the *Essence Book Club*, *Essence.com*, and ventures in digital media (including VOD). For 41 years, ESSENCE, which has a brand reach of over 8 million, has been the leading source of information and specific solutions relating to every area of African-American women's lives.

ABOUT PERENNIAL STRATEGY GROUP:

Perennial Strategy Group is a strategic advisory firm that provides government relations services to Fortune 500 companies, national non-profits, trade associations, and public-sector clients on a wide range of policy issues. The firm specializes in the areas of corporate-government collaboration, community and economic development, grassroots development, and corporate global strategy. For more information, Perennial Strategy Group visit www.perennialsg.com.

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