



# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, April 13, 2009

## **Students to Graduate from Madonna's Southwest Detroit Bachelor's Degree Program**

*Registration Open through April 30 for Summer Classes in Detroit*

LIVONIA, Mich. – The dream of a bachelor's degree comes true for Detroit residents Valerie Phillips-Keys and Linda Millner, Sunday, May 3, at Madonna University's graduation ceremony at Compuware Arena in Plymouth. They each have earned a Bachelor of Science degree in child development through Madonna's Southwest Detroit Women's Educational Empowerment Project (SWEEP).

"I am so happy that SWEEP provided me with the opportunity to return to school, it was one of the greatest decisions that I have made for my life," said Phillips-Keys. A divorced mother of three, she began taking Madonna classes at SWEEP after being laid off from her job with the Detroit Board of Education, due to budget cuts. Phillips-Keys recently obtained a new job as a pre-school teacher at the Vista Nuevas Head Start Center in Detroit. She plans to pursue her master's degree in educational leadership and become a pre-school center director.

Student Linda Millner was a pre-school teacher who began pursuing a degree to enhance her teaching credentials. "SWEEP was like a family, everyone bonded and the staff was welcoming and encouraging," she said. "It is a comfortable learning atmosphere for anyone returning to school."

Jim Novak, dean of outreach and distance learning at Madonna University recognizes the ripple effect SWEEP has on students and their families. "Education is empowering, not only economically, but emotionally, within families," said Novak. "SWEEP students serve as an inspiration for their families and their community, where educational values are passed on to future generations."

Phillips-Keys sometimes brought her son, now 13, to the center with her when she was working in the computer lab. "He would tell me that we were earning 'our' degree," she said with a smile. "Now he wants to be an engineer."

Over the past ten years, SWEEP, located at 2051 Rosa Parks Blvd., in Detroit, has graduated more than 40 students. The program offers an accommodating schedule of liberal arts classes, as well as courses for an associate and/or bachelor's degree in child development and social work. The Thompson Foundation has provided substantial funding, for the past eight years, to subsidize tuition for SWEEP

Admission and registration for spring/summer classes in child development is open through Thursday, April 30. For more information or to register, please contact Tia Silva at 800-852-4951, ext. 5733.

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