

# VocalEssence Founder and Artistic Director Philip Brunelle named “Local Legend”

**Minneapolis, (January 25, 2010)** – VocalEssence (\*) Founder and Artistic Director Philip Brunelle was recently honored with a “Local Legend” award at the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Breakfast. The sold-out event – hosted by the United Negro College Fund and the General Mills Foundation – was held on Monday, January 18 at the Minneapolis Convention Center and featured the Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery as keynote speaker.

Each year, the annual holiday breakfast includes the presentation of Local Legend awards, honoring those with a legacy of service who have dedicated themselves to helping others, while illustrating Dr. King’s commitment to nonviolent social change.

**Philip Brunelle**, conductor, choral scholar and performer, has devoted his career to sharing the rich history of wonderful, yet undiscovered, choral music. Under his leadership 20 years ago, VocalEssence launched WITNESS, an initiative that celebrates the contributions of African Americans to American heritage through concerts, recordings and education. This year alone, 7,500 students in 40 schools will participate in WITNESS.

Brunelle reaches out to African American composers who benefit from encouragement and exposure, but also inspire others and serve as positive role models. Brunelle’s work reminds everyone that music knows no racial boundaries – it crosses borders, spans the centuries and touches the hearts of its listeners.

(\*) *Founded in 1969, VocalEssence explores music for voices and instruments under the enthusiastic direction of conductor Philip Brunelle. [www.vocalescence.org](http://www.vocalescence.org)*