December 2, 2013

Greetings Community Partners and Friends:

The faces in our communities have been transformed into a dynamic mix of people comprised of various races, cultures and backgrounds, which make it crucial for us to look outside our comfort zone, to seek and retain a competitive business advantage. These trends allow new ideas and perspectives to emerge that support innovation, influence effective decision making and create strong connections to a diverse community and client base. It is only by embracing diversity and inclusion that we can truly benefit from the talent found in Southwest Florida and maximize our competitive edge.

Diversity is about recognizing, respecting and valuing differences based on ethnicity, gender, color, age, race, religion, disability, national origin, and sexual orientation. It also includes an infinite range of individual unique characteristics and experiences, such as communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, military experience, parental status and other variables that influence personal perspectives.

These life experiences and personal perspectives make us react and think differently, approach challenges and solve problems differently, make suggestions and decisions differently, and see different opportunities. Diversity, then, is also about diversity of thought.

In order to form stronger communities in which we have lasting business relationships with our customers and be influential leaders in the community, we must understand one another and become culturally competent.

The true practice of diversity will not exist unless there is the intentional and dedicated practice of inclusion of all. Therefore, it is the on-going initiative of Hodges University to build bridges to the larger community and to work with groups to bring a wider and more highlighted focus to the experiences of diversity and inclusion.

In celebration of our very diverse Southwest Florida communities, Hodges University is happy to announce our 7th Annual Diversity Festival that will be held on March 1, 2014; our Diversity Festival is this Community Relations initiative at work. The site for the 2014 event will be the Sugden Regional Park located at 4284 Avalon Drive in East Naples off of the East Tamiami Trail.

The entertainment will be even more exciting this year with a host of returning and new talent. We will also be entertained by our local elementary, middle and high school students. There will be award ceremonies and poetry recitals. In addition, our vendors will be disseminating valuable and educational public service information from the stage and their booths.
There will be marching bands, steel drum bands, singers and dance performers from our diverse Southwest Florida communities; beautiful arts and crafts to admire and purchase, as well as an outdoor “Fine Art Gallery” and “Cultural Heritage Exhibit”.

In addition, there will be a special educational venue for our children which include a variety of diversity and inclusion games, and arts and crafts, bounce houses, and face painting clowns. We will also have some great surprises in store for the children.

One of the highlight of the day will be our “Parade of Nations”. The array of fashion, styles, colors and culturally historical information regarding the clothing that is representative of many different cultures will be both educational and entertaining.

To ensure the success of this important, inclusive and educational community outreach event, we are requesting your support in the form of sponsorships, entertainment participant, food and merchandise vendors, and community services information vendors.

The following pages contain the sponsorship information need; participation at any level is encouraged, and will be of the greatest importance to the success of the Festival.

For more information please contact Gail Williams today at (239) 598-6135 or gwilliams@hodges.edu.

In addition, sponsorship information and payments can be made via our website:

www.hodges.edu  Click on quick links, and select the link “Diversity at Hodges”.