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Vikings Defense Coordinator and Defense Players speak to homeless and disabled youth at The Link's Lindquist Apartments about achieving goals in the face of adversity.

MINNEAPOLIS (Dec. 5, 2006) – As we prepare for the holiday season, it is important to remember that many people, including youth, are still continuing the struggle to maintain or obtain their basic needs, such as a warm place to stay.

This is the story of Cleora Brown. At a young age, Cleora's mother was murdered. Cleora was left to live with her grandmother, who was unable to provide the proper care for her. She was forced to move from the house of one relative to another, and was eventually left homeless living on park benches.

A Minneapolis native, Cleora was left outside in extreme cold temperatures. "It was so cold that my fingers were stiff and I couldn't move," remembers Cleora. This young girl went to drop in centers and shelters to get warm meals, but several times, she was not allowed to stay in shelters because of her young age.

Now, Cleora is a resident of Lindquist Apartments, a permanent, supportive housing program of The Link. At Lindquist Apartments, she is able to take control of her life and be her own person in a safe and sober environment. She is very thankful to be able to cook her own meals, have access to computers and most of all able to use the bathroom with out asking for permission. She is an active participant of the many activities available for Lindquist Apartments residents, and she is learning self empowerment and working hard to obtain employment. She has aspirations to further her education and go to college to receive her degree in fashion design. "I finally have case managers that care about me and are reliable," says Cleora.

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Homelessness

Homelessness affects as many as 600 youth on any given night, according to the Wilder Research Institute, and organizations such as The Link provide a safe, warm and sober environment for permanent housing with supportive life skills and self sufficiency services to 24 homeless or disabled youth ages 16 and up.

Hope in the Face of Adversity

On December 8, at 4:00, Mike Tomlin, Vikings Defense Coordinator and two Vikings Defense Players will be coming to The Link's Lindquist Apartments to give these young residents a motivational talk on achieving one's goals. Former Vikings Player Oscar Reed will also be in attendance.

The Lindquist Apartments are located at 1931 West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis. Please come and hear this motivational talk and engage in a discussion on achieving goals with Lindquist residents and Vikings team members.

The History: Scoring a "Touchdown"

This "pep talk" carries on the legacy of The Link, as motivational talks from pro sports players were the first activities carried out by our organization during its inception as Professional Sports Linkage. In 1991, former Minnesota Vikings Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed shared a common vision to create an oasis for at-risk Twin Cities youth. As a result, they co-founded Professional Sports Linkage, an organization devoted to education and mentorship. Attorney Leonard Lindquist provided the workspace and legal support.

"Fifteen years ago we set out to keep kids away from drugs and violence by providing educational services in math, art, athletics, theater and job and leadership training," said Reed. "It was all about helping kids realize they can live an enjoyable, productive life regardless of their perceived limitations or past trauma."

Added Marshall, "Back in the early days, our programs reinforced that everyone has an indestructible inner being that can rise above any challenge and succeed. It's a philosophy we use in professional sports, and more importantly in life. I'm thrilled this legacy continues today with programs The Link offers our community."

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Editor's Note:

To schedule an interview with organization founders, The Link staff, residents of Lindquist Apartments and other The Link clients, please contact Lauren Rimestad at lrimestad@thelinkmn.org and 612/871-0748.

About The Link

The Link (formerly Professional Sports Linkage when first founded, then Life's Missing Link) is a non-profit organization started in 1991 by Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed, former Minnesota Vikings. The organization is dedicated to linking youth, their families and communities to their inner strength by providing life skills, education, advocacy, supporting housing and a dynamic network of social services to transform lives. For more information, go to www.thelinkmn.org.