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70-Year-Old First Grader Learns to Read and Write With Assist from Smithfield Foods' Learners to Leaders™

*Smithfield Foods' Educational Program Donates \$10,000
To Help Alferd Williams Fulfill Promise Made to His Mother*

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. (May 2, 2008)—A sharecropper's son who never had the chance to go to school is now learning to read and write alongside his first-grade classmates, thanks to an assist from Smithfield Foods' Learners to Leaders™ program.

During a guest appearance yesterday on a nationally televised talk show, Alferd Williams, 70, of St. Joseph, was presented a \$10,000 check from the Smithfield-Luter Foundation, which funds the company's Learners to Leaders program. The donation, which will be used to offset Williams' living expenses, was made to a trust fund administered by Edison Elementary School, where Williams is attending first-grade classes.

In addition, Smithfield Foods presented a check for \$2,500 to purchase books for the school's library.

"We were greatly touched by Alferd's story, and we are delighted to be able to help him get the education that he has always wanted but was unable to pursue until recently," said C. Larry Pope, president and chief executive officer of Smithfield Foods.

"Alferd Williams sets a great example of what our Learners to Leaders program is all about," Pope said. "Alferd is inspiring all of us to seize new opportunities and he's setting a great example for his classmates that it's never too late to advance your education."

Williams, who was featured in a recent *People* magazine article, was the fourth of nine children and at the age of eight began helping his sharecropper father pick cotton, corn, potatoes and cabbage in the fields near Eudora, Ark. He never attended school, but promised his mother years ago that he would someday learn to read and write.

He finally began making good on his promise in 2005, when he started receiving special instruction from Alesia Hamilton, a teacher at Edison Elementary School. Eventually, Hamilton persuaded her principal to allow Williams to regularly attend her first-grade class, and his dedication and perseverance has served as an inspiration to his classmates ever since.

Learners to Leaders is a national educational alliance funded by Smithfield Foods' Smithfield-Luter Foundation and made up of Smithfield's independent operating companies and local educational partners. The alliance's goal is to help reinforce what organizers believe is the most critical part of any community's foundation, the education of its youth. Several Learners to Leaders programs have been launched in school districts around the country, but the effort in St. Joseph is the first one to be awarded to an adult recipient.

"We are firm believers that education is a key ingredient in strengthening communities and helping shape tomorrow's leaders," said Dennis Treacy, vice president of environmental and corporate affairs for Smithfield Foods. "Learners to Leaders provides a helping hand to people that allows them to overcome challenges to advancing their education, whether those challenges are academic, social or economic."

Treacy added, "The entire community benefits when its citizens maximize their educational opportunities."

Smithfield Foods is a global food company with operations in 13 countries through wholly owned subsidiaries and joint ventures. Headquartered in Smithfield, Va., the company produces more than 50 brands of pork, beef and turkey products and more than 200 gourmet foods. Employing more than 57,000 people across the globe, Smithfield Foods is the world's largest producer and processor of pork and a leader in turkey processing, cattle feeding and beef processing.

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