USF and East Tampa community leaders take part in Research Day 2006

Barbara Perkins

TAMPA, Fla. (April 21, 2006) – The community is invited to network with East Tampa leaders and University of South Florida faculty and students at the USF Collaborative for Children, Families and Communities Research Day 2006 April 27 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. John’s Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, 2504 Chipco St. This event is free and open to the public, but reservations are required. Call (813) 974-7318 for more information.

The day’s activities focus on revitalization of East Tampa’s Central Park area. Featured keynote speakers include Mayor Pam Iorio, Robert Blount, president of Abe Brown Prison Ministries and USF Student Body President Maxon Victor.

Robin Jones, coordinator of the USF College of Arts and Sciences Community Initiative and community activist Evangeline Best, chairwoman of East Tampa-Neighborhood Organization Works (ET-NOW) will deliver a presentation entitled Making Partnerships Work. Sam Kinsey, chair of the East Tampa Community Revitalization Partnership (ETCRP) also will share insights.

“This event showcases the community-based research conducted by USF students who meet with East Tampa leaders to share discoveries and opportunities in university-community partnerships,” said Judi Jetson, director of USF Collaborative.

Student presentations from six service learning grants, in the form of posters and oral reports, will be moderated by Harold Keller, professor and chair of the department of psychological and social foundations in the USF College of Education and chair of USF’s Neighborhoods and Communities Working Group. The presentations cover the areas of: Communications in the Community, Computers in the Community, Research in Applied Anthropology, African-American Community Research, Introduction to Anthropology and Introduction to Urban Government and Politics.

Highlights include:

• Engineering students majoring in computer science are working with four East Tampa schools to get their computers up and running. They also are serving as mentors as they help motivate the students to do well in school and aim for college.
• Communications students are helping the Public Safety Committee of East Tampa’s Community Revitalization Partnership open a dialogue between police and residents.

Past highlights include:

In 2004 graduate architecture students worked with area residents to develop architectural renderings depicting their visions for community revitalization for 22nd Street from Chelsea to 21st Avenue. Another project in 2005 had students identify 54 volunteer and civic groups, 29
recreational and social groups, 17 artistic groups and many political and support groups in an effort to map the social capital of East Tampa, thereby drawing attention to the area’s assets and strengths as well as its needs.

The University of South Florida is one of the nation’s top 63 public research universities as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF received more than $287 million in research contracts and grants last year, and it is ranked by the National Science Foundation as one of the nation’s fastest growing universities in terms of federal research and development expenditures. The university has a $1.3 billion annual budget and serves nearly 43,250 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota/Manatee and Lakeland. In 2005, USF entered the Big East athletic conference.