

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 210

BY SENATOR MILKOVICH

A RESOLUTION

To commend Danny Wuerffel, 1996 Heisman Trophy winner at the University of Florida and holder of seventeen National Collegiate Athletic Association and University of Florida football records, on his immeasurable service in supporting community leaders and revitalizing impoverished neighborhoods through spiritual and community development through his service, particularly with Desire Street Ministries.

WHEREAS, Danny Wuerffel was born in Pensacola, Florida, the son of a United States Air Force chaplain, who, with his family, lived all over the country and spent three years living in Spain; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Mr. Wuerffel graduated from Fort Walton Beach High School in Florida where he was class valedictorian, quarterbacked his football team to a state championship, and was considered the outstanding college football prospect in the state of Florida, eventually signing to play at the University of Florida; and

WHEREAS, after a redshirt first year, Danny Wuerffel spent the next four seasons breaking records and garnering national attention for his Florida Gators, capping his college career with a senior season in which he was awarded the Heisman Trophy as the most outstanding college football player, leading his team to its first national championship in a victory over its instate rival, Florida State University; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wuerffel went on to be drafted into the National Football League by the New Orleans Saints, bringing him in contact with a mission that would become his life's calling, and he played professional football for six years; and

WHEREAS, Wuerffel began working with a nonprofit, faith-based organization, Desire Street Ministries, focusing on spiritual and community development in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans while playing football for the Saints; and

WHEREAS, as Wuerffel became involved with this organization and its mission of faith-based community development, he helped found the Desire Street Academy where he

served as development director prior to the devastation by Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, the familiar story of flooding and destruction throughout the city of New Orleans, but particularly the swamping of the impoverished area of the Lower Ninth Ward, failed to chronicle the story of the Desire Street Academy whose students scattered from the flooding city and relocated across the South; and

WHEREAS, Danny and his wife, Jessica Wuerffel, were able to contact eighty of the students who had immediately evacuated to Florida, and eventually the school was temporarily moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where it foundered and eventually closed, but the Wuerffels' involvement with and dedication to the broader Desire Street Ministries continued; and

WHEREAS, in the wake of the storm, Desire Street Ministries grew to sites in several states and Mr. Wuerffel was named executive director of the organization, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia; the organization currently works in thirteen neighborhoods in seven cities across six states, while continuing its work where the roots of the organization are rebuilding in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, urban ministry leaders in the United States today face the tough challenges of concentrated poverty, failing schools, unsafe streets, deteriorated housing, high unemployment, and inadequate healthcare, but Desire Street Ministries believes that those who commit themselves to ministry in today's cities walk in God's promise to uncover His hidden beauty in places marred by outward decay; and

WHEREAS, Danny Wuerffel, despite fighting a 2011 diagnosis of Guillian-Barre' syndrome, continues to work tirelessly for the ministries, lending the high profile of his name and accomplishments to shine a light on the continuing good that the Desire Street Ministries does in the communities in which it is involved; and

WHEREAS, bringing the Desire Street Ministries back to its roots in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, in August 2016, the new Desire Community Square was opened, eleven years after the complete destruction of the area by Katrina; and

WHEREAS, by partnering with other nonprofit organizations, including Abundance of Desire, Daughters of Charity, and Kids of Excellence, the community center is encouraging development, growth, and sustainability of the neighborhood by including in

the Community Square both a comprehensive medical clinic and an early childhood center to serve the Desire community and attest to the commitment and faith of all those who work in the impoverished areas where the Desire Street Ministries operates; and

WHEREAS, Danny Wuerffel and his family have not been alone in working for and supporting the mission of Desire Street Ministries, but they have been a constant reminder of the miracles that faith can accomplish, even in the most blighted of areas; and

WHEREAS, named in honor of a man whose extraordinary exploits on the football field have been dwarfed by his spiritual leadership and community accomplishments in impoverished neighborhoods throughout the South, the Wuerffel Trophy, known as college football's premier award for community service, is awarded annually to the National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Bowl Subdivision player who best combines exemplary community service with athletic and academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, throughout his very public life in college and professional football and his exceptional life as a faith-based community advocate and tireless worker for improvement in impoverished communities, Danny Wuerffel has managed to make his incredible accomplishments in the world of sports; but a footnote in the story of his life and his deep spiritual faith has led him to unselfishly strive to better the lives of those living in the direst of conditions in this country.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Danny Wuerffel, 1996 Heisman Trophy winner at the University of Florida, and holder of seventeen National Collegiate Athletic Association and University Florida football records, on his immeasurable service in supporting community leaders and revitalizing impoverished neighborhoods through spiritual and community development through his service, particularly with Desire Street Ministries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Danny Wuerffel at Desire Street Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia.

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE