



## **BELLS FOR PEACE, INC**

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### **PATTI LABELLE'S VOICE "RINGS" IN SUPPORT OF BELLS FOR PEACE**

(Richmond, Virginia) – The Board of Directors of Bells for Peace announces that Patti LaBelle, **Grammy Award-winning Legend, Humanitarian, and New York Times Best-Selling Author** has recently become a Director. Ms. LaBelle is strongly committed to the call for peace and stability through (1) access to education, (2) access to health care, (3) access to housing, (4) access to employment and (5) access to equality of justice...all needed for peaceful and stable communities.

"Bells for Peace" is a non-profit charitable organization approved under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in 2006. It was established in support of Virginia Union University, one of the first historically African American universities in the world. **Few know that** The *Belgian Pavilion complex* of the **1939 New York World's Fair** was relocated to Richmond to the campus of Virginia Union University in 1941. The building was a gift of brotherhood, friendship and peace from the Government of Belgium at the close of the Fair. The building's carillon of "35 peace bells" was a gift from the Belgians to Former President Herbert Hoover for his Alma Mater, Stanford University. The bells were given in tribute to Hoover's relief efforts in Belgium following WWI. The Belgian Friendship Building's 161 foot tower in Richmond has stood *silent* on its historical campus for more than 65 years. Millions heard the carillon during the 1939 New York World's Fair, and millions have heard the bells ring at Stanford University. **Yet, few know of the connection between these two universities.**

Bells for Peace will be heard around the world, particularly on behalf of those who are least likely to receive the education necessary to achieve the 5 components of peace and stability in their lives.

The Belgian Friendship Building is a listed National Treasure and Virginia Landmark. Bells for Peace was founded upon the legacies of Dr. John Malcus Ellison, Sr. (1889-1979) and his wife Elizabeth Balfour Ellison (1911-1994). Dr. Ellison was the first African American president of Virginia Union University.



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### **BELLS FOR PEACE FACT SHEET**

- 25 Million People heard the bells ring from the Belgian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair.
- Belgium's gift was a powerful gesture of international goodwill years before Civil Rights Laws were enacted.
- Virginia Union University is an historical African American institution that opened in Richmond in 1865 out of Lumpkin's Jail, a former slave holding pen for runaway slaves, "broken," and returned to slavery.
- Dr. John Malcus Ellison, Sr., first African American President of Virginia Union University, and his wife, Elizabeth Balfour Ellison, committed their lives to building "a more excellent way" for countless adults who now live all over the world. Illustrious graduates during the Ellison years include the late Admiral Samuel L. Gravely, first African American Admiral (1948) and Former Virginia Governor, L. Douglas Wilder, first African American Governor in the United States (1954). Dr. Ellison attracted African students, of whom many graduated and returned to Africa. One named a Nigerian hospital for him in 1978.
- The Belgian Friendship Building is a United States Treasure and Virginia Historical Landmark.
- The Belgian Friendship Building was designed by Belgian Architect, Van de Velde, co-founder of Art Deco.
- The building's exterior bas-reliefs in sandstone were created by Belgian sculptors Jaspers, Puvrez and Dupagne. These were the first large bas-reliefs in sandstone since 500 BC.
- The building has traveled the world from Belgium, to New York, and to Virginia. Its carillon was awarded by the Belgians to Former President Hoover for his Alma Mater, Stanford University in California.
- The building houses a cultural arts center and gymnasium on the VUU campus.
- The 22,000 square feet Belgian Friendship Building was an induction center for WWII for all Eastern Virginia. 161,000 men were processed by the U.S. War Department from the building between 1943 and 1947. (Richmond News Leader, February 4, 1943, p.3 and July 24, 1947 p. 23). Watkins Nov. 9, 2006.
- Robert L. Vann, for whom the Belgian Friendship Building 161 foot tower is named, was a former VUU student, editor and publisher of the Pittsburgh Courier, and Assistant Attorney General during the Franklin Roosevelt Administration.
- Stanford University Alumni, world visitors, and world leaders have heard the carillon on the Stanford campus.
- In 1941, The Belgian Friendship Building Sponsoring Committee's honorary chair was Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was instrumental in facilitating the gift to Virginia Union University.
- Alan Nelson, clued by his sister, Dianne Watkins, made the connection between The Belgian Friendship Building and Stanford University in March 2004.

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