



## **KIPP® COOPER NORCROSS ACADEMY**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **KIPP COOPER NORCROSS ACADEMY NAMES GYMNASIUM IN HONOR OF LONGTIME CAMDEN LEADERS GILBERT “WHIP” WILSON & CARLTON “MUSCLES” WILSON**

**CAMDEN, N.J.** —KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy today named its gymnasium in honor of longtime Camden leaders Gilbert L. “Whip” Wilson and Carlton E. “Muscles” Wilson, brothers who grew up and still reside in the school’s Lanning Square neighborhood and have dedicated their lives to serving their city.

The gymnasium now officially called the Gilbert L. Wilson & Carlton E. Wilson Gymnasium.

“It is only fitting that we name this gym in honor of Sheriff Wilson and his brother Carlton,” said George E. Norcross, III, Chairman of Cooper University Health Care. “Born and raised in Camden, they continue to give back to the city and are examples for today’s young people of what you can accomplish when you work hard and are a dedicated leader.”

A member of the Camden Police Department for 26 years, Whip was the first African-American from the City of Camden to serve in the state Assembly and was recently elected as Camden County Sheriff. Muscles worked for the Camden Board of Education for more than 30 years and coached youth football and basketball teams for over 25 years.

“To have my name beside my brother’s on this gymnasium is one of the greatest honors in all of my career,” said Whip. “I hope it serves to inspire children to always do their best in whatever they do whether in the classroom, the Legislature or on the basketball court.”

Both Muscles and Whip coached basketball at Camden High School under the legendary coach Clarence Turner. Muscles also led the summer basketball league in Lanning Square and served as a referee for the Larry Gains Stop the Violence Basketball Tournament. He attended the former Lanning Square School at its inception and graduated in the first graduating class.

“I am incredibly humbled to have this gymnasium named after me and my brother,” said Muscles. “I have lived my entire life in Lanning Square and am excited and encouraged by the progress our neighborhood has made in recent years, especially with the opening of this amazing new school. This definitely goes in the win column for our community.”

In addition to Norcross and the Wilsons, more than 50 people attended the celebration, including Camden Mayor Dana Redd, The Cooper Foundation President and CEO Susan Bass Levin and KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy Executive Director Drew Martin.

“Today is such a special day as we honor two of our city’s greatest leaders and celebrate their longstanding commitment to Camden’s children and families,” said Redd. “Both men embody the values that students learn at KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy, including teamwork, leadership and perseverance.”

Levin commended the Wilsons for serving as mentors for Camden City youth and thanked them for being advocates for Camden and particularly Lanning Square.

“Both brothers recognize the importance of schools in anchoring communities,” Levin said. “Their contributions to Camden and the Lanning Square neighborhood are greatly appreciated and are changing lives for the better.”

Established under the Urban Hope Act, KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy is New Jersey’s first renaissance school and was created in partnership with KIPP, one of the most renowned, national networks of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public charter schools; The Cooper Foundation, the charitable arm of Cooper University Health Care, and the Norcross Foundation.

The newly constructed school provides a rigorous college preparatory curriculum beginning in the earliest grades and offers guaranteed enrollment for children from the Lanning Square and Cooper Plaza neighborhoods.

The 110,000-square-foot facility, which opened in August 2015, offers modern classrooms with state-of-the-art technology, art and music rooms, science labs, a cafeteria and auditorium space as well as the gym. The campus also features extensive recreational amenities including playing fields, outdoor basketball courts, and play areas for younger students.

“Our experience has shown that if you provide students with the right tools, skills, guidance and encouragement, they will rise to meet the expectations we set for them,” said Martin. “This gymnasium shows kids we care about them as a whole and sends a message that they too deserve the same high quality facilities as their peers in more affluent districts.”

#### **About KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy**

New Jersey’s first renaissance school, the KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy in Camden, N.J., was established under the state’s Urban Hope Act, which created a pilot program to provide students in three struggling school districts – Camden, Newark and Trenton – access to new, quality public schools in their communities. The Academy was created in partnership with KIPP, one of the most renowned, national networks of free, open enrollment, college preparatory public charter schools; The Cooper Foundation, the charitable arm of Cooper University Health Care, and the Norcross Foundation. The new, 110,000-square-foot campus opened in 2015 and provides guaranteed enrollment for students in grades Pre-K through 8th living in the Lanning Square and Cooper Plaza neighborhoods. The Camden network will include three additional new schools: an elementary school, middle school and a high school, eventually serving more than 2,800 students.

#### **About The Cooper Foundation/Cooper University Health Care**

The Cooper Foundation serves as the philanthropic, community outreach and community development arm of Cooper University Health Care, one of the largest health systems in southern New Jersey with over 100 outpatient offices and its flagship, Cooper University Hospital located in Camden, N.J. Cooper University Hospital is the premier university hospital serving South Jersey and the Delaware Valley. Cooper has reaffirmed its role as a leader in medical education and research with the opening of Cooper Medical School of Rowan University in 2012, the first four-year allopathic medical school in South Jersey. Cooper is renowned for signature programs in cardiology, cancer, critical care, pediatrics, trauma, orthopaedics and neurosciences. Cooper is also home to the only state designated Children’s Hospital in South Jersey—the Children’s Regional Hospital at Cooper. Over the last decade, Cooper has transformed

its Camden City neighborhood into the Cooper Health Sciences Campus. In October 2013, the new MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper, a freestanding cancer center for comprehensive care, opened on the Health Sciences Campus.