



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SPENT, THE ONLINE GAME ABOUT SURVIVING POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS, REACHES ITS MILLIONTH PLAY AND INVITES CONGRESS TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE**

*More than 1 million gamers and nongamers alike have tried surviving on \$1,000 a month; now McKinney and Urban Ministries of Durham invite Congress to accept the challenge and quickly see that poverty and homelessness can happen to anyone*

**DURHAM, NC August 31, 2011** – [SPENT](#), the innovative online game about surviving poverty and homelessness, has now been played more than 1 million times in more than 196 countries worldwide.

Launched earlier this year by ad agency [McKinney](#) for [Urban Ministries of Durham](#) (UMD), the totally immersive brand experience has helped people all over the globe reconsider how easy it is to fall out of hope and into poverty and homelessness. Visitors to the game at <http://www.playspent.org> spend an average of 9 minutes on the site as they accept the challenge to make difficult, real-life decisions about money and resources, the very same ones that affect families and individuals trying to survive every day.

“When we launched SPENT, we believed a game could be a powerful tool that would lead to a new understanding for how difficult and painful it is to live on the edge of losing everything,” said McKinney Chief Creative Officer Jonathan Cude. “I have to say we were thrilled and even surprised at the game’s ability to get people talking about and sharing their personal experiences and beliefs about homelessness. We’ve heard from hundreds of people and organizations all over the world, each having a unique story or point of view to offer. The one thing everyone agrees upon: Poverty and homelessness can happen to anyone.”

“SPENT has been a wonderful resource for Urban Ministries of Durham,” said UMD Executive Director Patrice Nelson. “It provides a new way to educate our community about homelessness and poverty, and we enjoy hearing from people all over the country who have found it useful for them as well. Raising financial support is always challenging, and the funds donated in income from the game are helping cover the operating costs of our shelter this year.”

Just in time for Labor Day, McKinney and UMD are also launching a [petition to the U.S. Congress](#) in light of the historic economic hardships facing average Americans. “People all over the country are fighting to keep their lights on, to keep their children fed and clothed, and to keep their dignity,” said Jenny Nicholson, copywriter at McKinney. “Our petition asks the men and women of Congress to take 10 minutes from their debating to experience for themselves the challenges that more than 14 million Americans are facing. We hope that by playing SPENT, they’ll know what it’s like to live on the edge of poverty and homelessness and perhaps seek quicker solutions that get Americans the jobs and services they so desperately need.”

Play SPENT at <http://playspent.org> and see if you could survive living on the edge of poverty.

### **How to play SPENT:**

- Navigate to <http://www.playspent.org>.
- Your savings are gone. You’ve lost your house. Accept the challenge to see if you can make it through the month on your last \$1,000, learning quickly how changes in employment, housing, medical costs and other expenses can create an unexpected shortfall.
- Play through a series of difficult challenges that require tough choices about work, where you live and what you can provide for your family, seeing all too soon how decisions lead to unimagined consequences. Learn important facts about the condition of homelessness and the many services UMD provides. Share the game on your personal social pages where you and your friends can help raise awareness of homelessness and how UMD helps.
- Whether you quit or get to the end with no dollars or one, click “Donate to UMD” or “Get involved” and view the many ways players can contribute time and/or money via [PayPal](#). Or play again hoping for a different outcome.

“With every play, and people have come back again and again, we hope to continue building a real appreciation for how easy it is to end up SPENT both literally and emotionally,” Cude added. “At the end of the game, you can ‘win’ with money left over, but how many times did you feel compromised to shortchange your family members or your values? It’s a painful cycle made all too real by today’s headlines. But that’s the game’s intention. One million times over.”

### **Supporting Resources**

<http://mckinney.com>

<http://fivewords.mckinney.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Durham-NC/McKinney/285973579398>

<http://twitter.com/McKinney>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/McKinneyDurham>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mckinneydurham>

<http://www.umdurham.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Urban-Ministries-of-Durham/125099621030>

### **About Urban Ministries of Durham**

Urban Ministries of Durham (UMD) is a private, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization providing food, clothing, shelter and supportive services to neighbors in need since 1983. UMD focuses on homelessness prevention, homeless rehousing, emergency assistance and collaboration with community partners to assist people in need. In addition to the Community Café, Shelter, Food Pantry and Clothing Closet, UMD provides structured case management services for shelter residents through the Journey Program. This program assists families, residents struggling with addiction, those with special medical/mental health conditions and residents seeking to enhance their job skills to secure employment and housing. Over the last year, UMD provided shelter to 1,248 unduplicated guests. The Community Café served 219,552 meals and is currently serving 500 to 600 meals per day. UMD's Food Pantry distributed 67,917 pounds of food, and the Clothing Closet distributed 47,964 articles of clothing to approximately 400 households per month. For more information about our services and performance, please visit <http://www.umdurham.org>.

### **About McKinney**

McKinney is an independent advertising agency leading the evolution of the advertising industry in a post-digital world.

Founded in 1969, the Durham, NC-based agency is recognized for having built one of the most innovative business models in the industry, one that blurs the lines between traditional and digital media. As a result, McKinney has been recognized as one of the best agencies in the country by Advertising Age and one of a handful of agencies setting the standard for creativity by ONE Magazine. McKinney's work has earned 24 Effie Awards over the past eight years, which ranks McKinney ninth of more than 130 agencies winning the American Marketing Association's recognition of communication-driven business success.

The agency's clients include Abbott Nutrition's EAS, Gold's Gym, Big Boss Brewing, Lenovo, Nationwide Insurance, Partnership for a Drug-Free America, CenturyLink, Radio Flyer, Sherwin-Williams, Brown-Forman Corporation and Zenph Sound Innovations.

Recently, McKinney launched [the McKinney Ten Percent](#), a program encouraging employees to dedicate 10% of their time to innovation.

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