



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MCKINNEY CREATES SPENT, THE FIRST ONLINE GAME ABOUT HOMELESSNESS, FOR URBAN MINISTRIES OF DURHAM

McKinney's SPENT is an immersive online experience that challenges gamers and non-gamers alike to survive poverty and see first-hand that homelessness is just a shortfall away

DURHAM, NC February 8, 2010 – Even in the current economy, assumptions about poverty and homelessness abound such as “I’ll never be in that situation” or “If I were struggling, I’d figure out something.” Today, ad agency [McKinney](#) and [Urban Ministries of Durham](#) challenge those beliefs with the launch of [SPENT](#), an online game that uses social media to educate people about poverty, homelessness and UMD.

“In 2010, we took advantage of new media vehicles to engage people with UMD in a new, very powerful way,” said McKinney Chief Creative Officer Jonathan Cude, citing Facebook, Twitter and most recent [unprecedented use of FourSquare](#). “Gaming is such a huge influence and with so many people spending literally millions of hours tending virtual farms, we thought why not bring gamers face-to-face with a very real issue like homelessness that affects us all. And people who play SPENT then share the experience on their own pages, help UMD tell its story and reach new audiences like never before.”

“SPENT offers us a unique opportunity to expand people’s understanding of UMD’s client population and the wide variety of services we offer,” said UMD Executive Director Patrice Nelson. “As players struggle to stay afloat, we hope they appreciate more clearly the realities facing the many individuals and families UMD serves. This latest initiative will help UMD engage an entirely new pool of volunteers and donors, and we are grateful for McKinney’s expertise and leadership courage in the Durham community and beyond.”

How to play SPENT:

- Navigate to <http://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 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.
- 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.

"In any of these scenarios, a player will have a new appreciation for how easy it can be to end up homeless," said Cude. "A player can survive the month with money left but is emotionally 'spent' because of decisions made that compromised family and integrity; or a player can try to make it to the end of the game but run out of money days before the month is over. In all instances, players are encouraged to share the game on their personal social media pages where they can help raise awareness of homelessness and how UMD helps."

"We believe SPENT will show people how crucial community support is to UMD's mission and that you really can use a game to talk about homelessness," added Cude. "We hope that experiencing these challenges first-hand in a gaming environment will lead to a new understanding for how difficult and painful it is to be 'spent.' Thankfully, for all of us in Durham, UMD is here to help."

Supporting Resources

<http://mckinney.com>

<http://fivewords.mckinney.com>

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Flickr](#)

<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 non-profit organization providing food, clothing, shelter and supportive services to neighbors in need since 1983. UMD focuses on homelessness prevention, homeless re-housing, emergency assistance and collaboration with community partners to assist people in need. In addition to the Community Café, Shelter, Food Pantry & 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 500-600 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 our services and performance please visit <http://www.umdurham.org>.

About McKinney

McKinney is an independent advertising agency focused on game-changing ideas that make extraordinary things happen. McKinney is reinventing the conversation between people and brands through the integration of offline, online and social media and through the relevant application of new technologies.

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 23 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 has also won more Interactive Advertising Bureau MIXX Awards than any other agency since the show first opened in 2005.

The agency's clients include Coldwell Banker, Abbott Nutrition's EAS, Gold's Gym, Big Boss Brewery, Nationwide Insurance, Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Qwest Communications, Sherwin-Williams, Brown-Forman Corporation and Zenph Sound Innovations.

###

McKinney Media Contact:

Janet Northen

919.313.4062

janet.northen@mckinney.com

[@jnorthen](#)

Urban Ministries Media Contact:

Amy Barefoot

919.451.3515

amy@barefootpublic.com