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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**HOUSTON TEXANS WHITNEY MERCILUS TACKLES THE  
CAUSE FOR AUTISM**

**-Mercilus and the WithMerci Foundation Holds Annual Fundraiser  
*Dine WithMerci to GiveWithMerci-***

HOUSTON, TX- Houston Texans Whitney Mercilus, a champion for community empowerment epitomizes being his “brothers” keeper. Known for showing **NO MERCI** on the field, but off the field, he is known for utilizing his platform to give hope and touch lives. Founder of the WithMerci Foundation, Mercilus work is focused on providing advocate services and financial support to families of children with disabilities and special needs. In an effort to continue to provide fiscal assistance while giving a “hand-up” to those in need, the WithMerci Foundation presents its’ annual fundraiser ***Dine WithMerci*** on **Monday, October 30, 2017 at One-Fifth Houston** located at **1658 Westheimer Rd. Houston, Texas 77006**. The red carpet is set for **6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. with the dinner and program immediately following from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

Whitney Mercilus and the WithMerci Foundation have donated **\$125,000.00** since its inception to support organizations servicing children with special needs. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Mercilus and his foundation were champions on the road to recovery. During their post-Harvey back-to-school bash “Returning 2 Learning,” students within the Houston Independent School District (HISD) received FREE haircuts, hairstyles, school supplies, backpacks and meals. Additionally, they have donated **\$65,000.00** towards recovery efforts to **Smartie Pants Academy**, a school specifically servicing students with disabilities and special needs and **\$20,000.00** to **HISD for the Department of Special Education**. This year the foundation focuses on assisting children with autism. Mercilus and the WithMerci Foundation will present a total of **\$40,000.00** in donations to **Easter Seals of Greater Houston, F.A.C.E.S. and Autism Rescue Angels**. Each organization provides advocate services and support to families with autistic children.

*“I started the WithMerci Foundation because I love working with children, and I’ve developed a passion to help underprivileged kids whose parents can not afford the cost for medical equipment or pharmaceutical drugs,”* said Mercilus.

Donors will have the opportunity to dine with Mercilus, members of the Houston Texans to include, **DeShaun Watson, Jadeveon Clowney, Kareem Jackson, Johnathan Jospeh, Lamar Houston, Andre Hal and Benardrick McKinney, Jon Weeks, Christian Covington, Dylan Cole, Gimel President, Ufomba Kamalu, Derek Newton, Alfred Blue, Shane Lechler, Brennan Scarlett and Brian Peters**, as well as local celebrities and socialites for this special occasion. In addition, donors will also be able to bid on sports memorabilia, luxury gifts as well as learn more about their favorite Texans. **The original Texan, Chester Pitts and KPRC morning anchor, Owen Conflenti will serve as hosts for the event. Rounding out the special guests list for this star-studded event, world-renowned hip-hop legends Paul Wall and Bun B, soccer great and Dynamo All-Time Leading Scorer, Brian Ching, Exclusive Furniture**

**Founder and CEO, Sam Zavary, Miss Pakistan USA, Hirra Khan, and legendary prima ballerina and Houston Ballet alumna, Lauren Anderson.**

For more information about The WithMerci Foundation, please visit [www.withmerci.org](http://www.withmerci.org). You can connect with the foundation on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @withmerci.

**WithMerci Foundation Vision** - Start WithMerci by believing in and advocating for children around the world with disabilities and special needs. Live WithMerci through services and support that ensure children with disabilities feel included through all aspects of life. Work WithMerci through special sporting events and by providing education to individuals. Give WithMerci through financial support.

*WithMerci Foundation, Inc. ("WithMerci") is a Texas nonprofit corporation operating through a fiscal sponsorship with Players' Philanthropy Fund (Federal Tax ID: 27-6601178), a Maryland nonprofit corporation recognized by the IRS with federal tax-exempt status as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3). Contributions to WithMerci are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*

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