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Global Cultures Inspire Local Teens' Music, Dance, Artistic Performances

*250 + students from underserved communities showcase diverse talents at
After School Matters Showcase*

CHICAGO, IL -March 31, 2009- More than 250 Chicago teens who have spent the semester perfecting their vocal, theatrical, instrumental and dance techniques, as well as culinary skills and visual artwork, had the opportunity of a lifetime to perform for an audience of 2,000 at the legendary Chicago Theatre during the fourth annual After School Matters Citywide Showcase.

Chicago's cultural richness was on display as students honored their heritage and learned about diversity through their participation in the City's After School Matters program. Nationally recognized for offering hands-on programming that exposes teens to rewarding careers and helps them develop marketable job skills, After School Matters is one of the nation's largest providers of after-school programs for high school students.

"The Citywide Showcase provides an opportunity for teens from communities throughout Chicago to share their talents," said After School Matters executive director David Sinski. "Everyone is proud of them because they see how our programs provide teens with exciting opportunities and skills that last a lifetime."

Celebrating a range of global influences, the event included a traditional Chinese folk dance from apprentices at the Chinese American Service League, a Korean drumming demonstration by the Korean American Resource & Cultural Center, a Mariachi band performance by Curie High School apprentices, and a hip hop dance from South Shore High School apprentices among many others.

"Participating in the showcase is fascinating because students from all over Chicago come together to do what they love," said Eric Campos, an 18-year-old student at Lane Tech High School. "Everyone is so talented and I'm proud to be involved."

Taking their skills beyond the stage, teens in the After School Matters culinary arts program assisted with the preparation and service of hors d'oeuvres and desserts for guests to enjoy. In addition, an on-site gallery featured the teens' artwork in various mediums, including jewelry, furniture, painting, photography and soft sculpture. The pieces were made available for purchase.

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“I have had such a fun and enjoyable time participating in the visual arts program,” said 17-year-old Ariel Williams, a student at King High School. “I’ve made so many new friends. Life would be boring without After School Matters.”

After School Matters is one of the only programs of its size and scale in the country that provides after-school activities specifically for teens in the fields of arts, sports, science, technology and communications. According to the organization, teens who participated in After School Matters for four or more semesters were nearly two-and-a-half times more likely to graduate than students who did not participate. After School Matters helps Chicago teens find their future by creating positive relationships between teens and adults through hands-on, experiential learning in safe, structured environments.

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### **ABOUT AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS**

[www.afterschoolmatters.org](http://www.afterschoolmatters.org)

*After School Matters is a non-profit organization that partners with the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and Community-Based Organizations to expand out-of-school opportunities for Chicago teens.*

*Through After School Matters innovative gallery37, science37, sports37, tech37, and words37 programs, Chicago teens take part in engaging activities that provide skills that translate to the workplace.*

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