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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**After School Matters® Celebrates 20 Years of
Supporting Chicago Teens at Annual Gala**

*Chicago teens, program alumni, supporters, donors and others gather
to commemorate two decades of innovative out-of-school time programming for teens*

CHICAGO—September 21, 2011—More than 220 Chicago teens came together to sing, dance, play instruments, showcase visual art and practice culinary skills for nearly 1,500 guests Wednesday at the annual fundraising Gala for Chicago’s After School Matters® program, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. For two decades, the program has offered Chicago Public Schools high school students quality out-of-school time opportunities in the arts, science, sports, technology and communications.

The Gala, which was held at Chicago’s historic Navy Pier, was hosted by the City’s Former First Lady and After School Matters Founder and Chair Maggie Daley, Former Mayor Richard Daley and Honorary Chair Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The Gala raised more than \$2.8 million to support programming for Chicago teens.

The evening included a musical performance by the Jazz Big Band program ("Gertrude’s Bounce" by Richie Powell); vocal performances by Projectheater and the Vocal Arts Ensemble ("Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats" from *Cats* and "Coronation Celebration" by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, respectively); and dance routines by the After School Matters Dance Ensemble, Hip Hop Culture and the Joffrey Ballet Summer Intensive programs ("Speaking in Tongues" and "Kanye Suite" both choreographed by teen apprentices and "Incantation" choreographed by a Joffrey company member, respectively). The finale, a high-spirited medley, was a collaborative performance by all six groups.

Apprentices from the After School Matters culinary arts program greeted guests with hors d'oeuvres, explaining the ingredients and preparation of each delicacy. A gallery of teen artwork featured hat design and jewelry, metal design, paintings, prints, teen-designed skateboards and wood carvings. Colorful hand-blown glass centerpieces—created by teens in this summer’s Glassworks program in conjunction with one of After School Matters more than 130 partner community organizations, Co-op Image Group—adorned the dinner tables. All visual art pieces were available for purchase during the event and will now be for sale, along with a variety of other items, at the gallery37 Retail Store, located at 66 E. Randolph.

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“Twenty years later, I am still amazed at the talents of these teens,” said Maggie Daley. “High school students—like those here tonight—are seeking opportunities to develop their skills, build their resume, make friends and stay safe when they are not in school. Over the past two decades, After School Matters has provided those opportunities to tens of thousands of teens – and moving forward, our goal is to serve even more Chicago public high school teens with continued support from our partner organizations and agencies, and generous private donors.”

After School Matters began in 1991 as a summer arts program, serving 260 teens under large tents on the then-undeveloped Block 37 lot in Chicago’s downtown Loop and was called “Gallery 37.” Four years later, Gallery 37 established a partnership with Chicago Public Schools and began to provide programming in high schools. In 2000, the successful apprenticeship formula used in the arts programs was expanded to technology, sports and communications. This array of programs became known as After School Matters, an umbrella organization for all of the content areas: gallery37[®], tech37[®], sports37[®] and words37[®]. In 2006, with generous support from Abbott, science programming—science37[®]—was added to the organization’s program content menu. Over the past two decades, After School Matters has become a nationally recognized model for best practices in after-school programs serving teens.

Mrs. Daley continues to serve as the Chair of After School Matters, which has become the largest program of its kind in the nation, and will offer 20,000 program opportunities to Chicago public high school teens this year. The organization partners with Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Public Library, as well as with more than 100 community organizations to provide programming.

“Providing opportunities for our students to be engaged after school – whether academic, artistic or athletic – is a win-win for our children, our communities and our City,” said Mayor Emanuel. “I’m committed to finalizing a system-wide after-school program and ensuring that every child in every neighborhood in Chicago has access to a safe and supportive learning environment, like After School Matters, where they can learn valuable life and leadership skills to prepare them for college and their career.”

Studies show that teens involved in After School Matters failed fewer courses, graduated from high school at higher rates and had higher school attendance than students who did not participate (University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall Center for Children study, 2007). In fact, on average, After School Matters teens were in school 4.68 more days than other Chicago Public Schools teens, and those who participate in three or more After School Matters programs over the course of their high school career were in school 11.8 more days than other Chicago Public Schools teens (Chicago Allies for Youth Success data, 2011). After School Matters has been proven to produce positive effects in several areas, such as improving teens’ abilities to work in groups, communicate effectively, plan and meet deadlines and cooperate with flexibility (Erikson Institute study, 2006).

For the evening, After School Matters supporter Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois projected After School Matters initials – ASM – in lights on the façade of their building in Chicago’s Loop, in honor of the Gala.

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The Gala is presented by AT&T. Other sponsors include, Abbott and the Abbott Fund; Ann Lurie; Ardmore Associates, LLC; Bank of America; Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois; BMO Harris Bank; CVS; East Lake Management and Development Corporation; ITW; Jones Day; JPMorgan Chase & Co; Motorola Solutions Foundation; Neal & Leroy, LLC; United; Walgreens and Wal-Mart.

This year, After School Matters will offer 20,000 teen opportunities in more than 600 different programs in the arts, science, sports, technology and communications at more than 175 locations throughout the city. Programs begin Monday, October 3. Teens can search and apply for programs online at www.afterschoolmatters.org.

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After School Matters is a nonprofit organization that offers Chicago public high school teens high quality, out-of-school-time opportunities to explore and develop their talents, while gaining critical skills for work, college and beyond. Our hands-on, project-based arts, science, sports, technology and communications programs are delivered at Chicago public high schools, community locations across the city and downtown at Gallery 37 Center for the Arts. After School Matters programs are developed and delivered through a network of public and private partnerships, including Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Library and a wide range of community organizations.

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