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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chicago Teens Celebrated at Annual After School Matters® Gala

After School Matters and its supporters celebrate the more than 15,000 Chicago teens served by the organization this year at annual Gala featuring teen performances and exhibits

CHICAGO—Approximately 1,000 civic, corporate and community leaders attended the After School Matters® Annual Gala on Monday, September 21 to celebrate the more than 15,000 Chicago teens who participated in After School Matters programs this year. The event showcased the talents of more than 200 Chicago teens through on-stage performances as well as visual displays in the arts, communications, science, sports and technology.

The Annual Gala, held in the Lakeview Terrace and Grand Ballroom of Chicago's historic Navy Pier, was presented by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois and hosted by the After School Matters Board of Directors. Gala Chairs included Mellody Hobson and George Lucas; Gigi Pritzker and Michael A. Pucker; D'Rita and Robbie Robinson; Cari and Michael J. Sacks; and Tina and Byron D. Trott.

"Our responsibilities to the youth of Chicago do not end when the school bell rings at the end of the day or the end of the year. After School Matters plays an essential role in keeping more of our youth safe and supervised when they are out of school while also giving them opportunities to discover their full potential," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I want to thank the staff and supporters of After School Matters for providing thousands of Chicago's young people with the opportunities they need for the successful futures they deserve."

For more than two decades, After School Matters has offered Chicago high school teens high quality, expanded-learning opportunities that allow them to explore and develop their talents, while gaining critical skills for work, college and beyond. This summer, After School Matters provided 9,000 opportunities through more than 400 programs throughout the city.

"Supporting After School Matters and its teens means making an investment in our collective future – an investment that can change the trajectory of a teen's life. Through the years, After School Matters has provided more than 200,000 young adults with the opportunity to become formidable scientists, artists, architects and corporate leaders," said Mellody Hobson, board chair of After School Matters. "Since 2012, we have been steadily increasing program opportunities, yet still cannot meet the demand. Last year, After School Matters served 15,000 teens, while nearly 40,000 teens applied for these spots. Our goal is to provide all teens with a chance to realize their potential."

The Gala's reception featured teens engaging guests through visual and performance arts displays including music, drawing, painting, glassworks, photography, multi-media digital arts, glassworks, print-making and jewelry-making, as well as interactive displays showcasing their skills in lifeguarding, energy and urban agriculture. The evening's program included song and dance performances by teens from across the city in a variety of After School Matters programs, including a collaborative performance of "Glory" from the movie *Selma*. All visual art pieces displayed at the event were

available for purchase, and any not purchased will now be on sale at the After School Matters Retail Store, located at 66 E. Randolph. All proceeds directly support After School Matters programming.

After School Matters is the largest provider of high quality after-school and summer programs for high school students in the nation, offering 22,000 program opportunities annually for Chicago teens—83 percent of whom live in high poverty communities within the city. Research shows that teens who participate in After School Matters programs graduate from high school and enroll in college at higher rates than their peers.

“While we celebrate many accomplishments tonight, by no means is our work done. We must work harder than ever to increase opportunities for even more teens throughout Chicago, as we continue to refine the excellence of the programs we provide,” said Mary Ellen Caron, chief executive officer of After School Matters. “We are certain that our current teens will become future innovators, and we are hopeful that we can reach even more teens in the years to come.”

Gala Co-Chairs included Ariel Investments, BDT & Company, LLC, GCM Grosvenor and the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation. ‘Investor-level’ sponsors included BMO Harris Bank, ComEd, the Richard M. Daley family, East Lake Management and Development Corporation, Matt and Denise Gibson, ITW, Katie McGrath and J.J. Abrams, the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Foundation, the Dona and Sam Scott Foundation, the Sun-Times Foundation / The Chicago Community Trust, and Helen and Sam Zell.

After School Matters is enormously grateful for all of the support it received at this year’s Gala. Individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations interested in supporting and contributing to After School Matters can visit www.afterschoolmatters.org/support-us/give-to-asm/. Those interested in volunteering can visit www.afterschoolmatters.org/volunteer. Teens can search and apply for programs at www.afterschoolmatters.org/teens. Follow After School Matters on Twitter at [@afterschoolmatters](https://twitter.com/afterschoolmatters), on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AfterSchoolMatters and on Instagram at [AfterSchoolMatters](https://www.instagram.com/AfterSchoolMatters). Learn more at www.afterschoolmatters.org.

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ABOUT AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS:

After School Matters is a nonprofit organization that offers Chicago 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. Over the course of our history, more than 200,000 teens have participated in our hands-on, project-based after-school and summer programs in the arts, communications, science, sports and technology. Programs take place at locations throughout the city including Chicago public high schools, Chicago Park District and Chicago Public Library locations, community-based organizations and downtown at the Gallery 37 Center for the Arts.

For more information, visit www.afterschoolmatters.org. Follow After School Matters on Twitter at [@afterschoolmatters](https://twitter.com/afterschoolmatters), on Facebook at [facebook.com/afterschoolmatters](https://www.facebook.com/afterschoolmatters), on YouTube at [youtube.com/afterschoolmatters](https://www.youtube.com/afterschoolmatters), and on Instagram at [AfterSchoolMatters](https://www.instagram.com/AfterSchoolMatters).

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