

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 21, 2009

Martin Nesbitt
Chairperson

Board of Commissioners

Hallie Amey

Deverra Beverly

Dr. Mildred Harris

Michael Ivers

Myra King

Carlos Ponce

Bridget Reidy

Sandra Young

Lewis A. Jordan

Chief Executive Officer

Scott W. Ammarell

General Counsel

Contact:

Adaku Onyeka, Chicago Housing Authority: (312) 913-7482; aonyeka@thecha.org

Bryant Payne, MK Communications: (312) 822-0505; bpayne@mkcpr.com

Annual CHA Holiday Gala Reaches its Silver Year
2,000 seniors, dignitaries celebrate event's 25th anniversary

CHICAGO – Mayor Richard M. Daley and 2,000 senior citizens from around the city helped the Chicago Housing Authority celebrate its biggest event of the year: The 25th Annual Senior Holiday Gala at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

The Gala, which regularly sells out within days of tickets going on sale, is a hallmark CHA event that offers seniors an afternoon of live music, dancing and holiday cheer.

The event started with an opening invocation from CHA Commissioner Dr. Mildred Harris, followed by a three-course soul food dinner of chicken gumbo, smothered chicken, greens, cheese grits, sweet potatoes, and a strawberry chocolate cream puff dessert. At the end of the lunch service, the Gentlemen of Leisure House Band took the stage to serenade the room with funk, soul and R&B classics.

In his speech to attendees, Mayor Daley paid tribute to the contributions seniors have made to the city over the years while highlighting the important role younger people play in carrying the torch from Chicago's seniors.

"Seniors have done their job to make Chicago great," the mayor said. "We want to look after you, but we also want to make sure the next generation has what they need to succeed."

CHA CEO Lewis Jordan said he had been anticipating the gala all year – and even invited his mother and aunt to join in the day's festivities.

"Last year was my first time attending this event, and I can honestly say I have been looking forward to coming back to participate in this celebration with good food, good music and good friends." Jordan said.

After the speaking program ended, Gala staple and gospel singer Cathy Townsend belted out a gospel medley before the Gentlemen of Leisure took the stage again to provide more music for dancing.

The audience was peppered with elected officials and dignitaries including U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis, 2nd Ward Ald. Robert Fioretti, 3rd Ward

Ald. Pat Dowell, 4th Ward Ald. Toni Preckwinkle, 27th Ward Ald. Walter Burnett, Cook County Circuit Clerk Dorothy Brown and CHA Commissioners Deverra Beverly, Myra King, Bridget Reidy, Sandra Young and Carlos Ponce, who introduced Mayor Daley.

To cap off the event, every senior was given a warm memento for their attendance – a brand new Snuggie.

The Senior Gala began in 1983 and was originally called the Christmas Grand Ball Gala. Since the arrival of CHA Director of Senior Supportive Services Donna Dixon, the event has flourished – doubling in attendance and becoming one of Chicago’s holiday staples.

This year’s gala closes out an eventful year for CHA, which reopened two senior buildings and completely rehabilitated 9,178 senior units since the beginning of the Plan for Transformation – 98 percent of Plan-end goal. Renovations include new heating and cooling systems, updated kitchens and baths and improved community rooms and shared space.

CHA is leasing units in several senior-designated buildings. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 1-866-NEWCHA-1 (1-866-639-2421) or visit www.thecha.org/seniors.

####

Note for Editors: Photos of the Senior Gala are available at the following web addresses:

Photo #1:

http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/CHASeniorGalaA_RepDannyDavis.JPG

Suggested Caption: U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis takes to the dance floor with a Gala attendee.

Photo #2:

http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/CHASeniorGalaB_MayorDaley.JPG

Suggested Caption: Mayor Richard M. Daley poses with Thurman Perry, who at 107 years old was the oldest attendee at this year’s Gala.

Photo #3:

http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/CHASeniorGalaC_LewisJordan.JPG

Suggested Caption: Lewis Jordan, CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority, shares a laugh with two seniors.

Photo #4: http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/CHASeniorGalaD_Dancing.JPG

Suggested Caption: Seniors who attend the gala boogie to R&B classics performed by the Gentlemen of Leisure House Band.

Photos Courtesy of the Chicago Housing Authority