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S.T.E.M. Campers Harness Green Power & Prep for College *Closing Ceremony Bookends Summer of Exploratory Learning*

CHICAGO (Aug. 16, 2010) – Innovation, intelligence and ingenuity were on display at the closing ceremony of A Chance for CHAnge Summer S.T.E.M. Camp Thursday, Aug. 12 at the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center.

The camp, which was sponsored by CHA, Ameresco, Inc., and the University of Illinois at Chicago, catered to 25 high school sophomores and juniors who expressed an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (S.T.E.M.).

Campers met three days a week, during the six-week course, to enhance their understanding of a college-level curriculum by participating in a series of lectures, conducting case studies and working in groups to perform project-based experimentation.

To mimic a collegiate environment, classes were held at the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, with campers having an opportunity to live in the residential halls for a week of the summer program, and partaking in a number of field trips and community service activities.

Thursday's closing ceremony was a showcase of the students' accomplishments – with class projects on display, an opportunity to network with industry professionals and an encouraging keynote address from Lewis Jordan, CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority.

"I know all the cheering, applause and accolades may seem a little overwhelming for those not used to being in the spotlight," Jordan said in his address. "But I just want to tell you students something: Get used to it. Get used to being recognized for your brightness, your knowledge and for being able to do more than just run, jump and rap."

All students received a \$700 stipend, a certificate of completion and 10 high-performing campers received iPod nanos for their outstanding achievements throughout the program.

One of those high achievers was Paris Lockett, 16, who received special recognition for her capstone essay detailing what experiences she gained from camp and her career ambitions to become an obstetrician/gynecologist.

“One thing I learned is to not be afraid to meet new people. I’ve met a lot of instructors who can help me out in college and a lot of great, new friends,” Lockett said as she embraced Whitnee Rogers, 14, her “adopted” little sister from the camp.

Lockett will be a high school junior this fall and hopes to attend either UIC or Georgetown University.

“The level of understanding, especially given the age of the students, was surprising and inspiring,” said Jaime Frausto, an Ameresco employee, former UIC alumnus and program coordinator.

CHA and partners are already examining what components to add and adjust for next year, including the possibility of creating a scholarship for Chance for CHAnge participants in the future. UIC currently provides resources for underrepresented or minority students to assist in their academic endeavors.

In addition to the S.T.E.M. Camp, CHA in partnership with the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, various companies and philanthropies has provided more than 5,000 employment, recreational and educational opportunities for young people this summer.

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