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Next Step: College Prep Program Offers Success, Helps Build Confidence *CHA Summer Program Gears Up for Second Year*

CHICAGO – The Chicago Housing Authority with partners Siemens Building Technologies and Windows of Opportunity are starting classes for Next Step: College Prep, a summer educational program that prepares students for life after high school – with emphasis on pursuing post-secondary education.

The program, which starts classes June 23, is centered on a web-based curriculum that helps students living in public housing improve their math and reading scores. Over the seven weeks, participants also sharpen their soft skills, such as resume writing, interviewing tips and etiquette training.

The result is a meaningful program designed to boost academic performance for the following school year, improve self-confidence and help actualize the potential of each participant.

Darius Robinson was a participant in the first year of Next Step: College Prep. Although it was difficult giving up part of his summer vacation to attend classes, he says the program gave him an advantage over his other classmates during his senior year.

“I was in world literature, and my teacher asked the class what a ‘hyperbole’ was,” Robinson said. “No one else knew. But I knew. And that’s when I knew the class had paid off.”

Robinson credits the course for giving him the confidence to apply for college, and come fall 2008, he will leave for Alabama A&M University.

More than half of the students who participated in Next Step: College Prep last year increased their reading and/or math scores by at least two grade levels. Ten of the 19 students improved from a seventh grade level in reading comprehension and/or math, to at least a ninth-grade level. The most dramatic enhancement was in math, where three students progressed by nearly three grade levels.

“The class helped me realize that I could actually do the work,” said Robinson, who improved by a class-high 2.9 grade levels in last year’s program. “As I

progressed, I started to gain confidence. I would definitely recommend the class. It's a life-changing experience.”

Classes meet weekdays (Monday through Friday) from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Illinois Institute of Technology. For more information, contact DeAnn King at Dking@thecha.org or (312) 786-4066.

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About the Chicago Housing Authority

The CHA was created by state legislation in 1937 to create and expand affordable housing opportunities for low income families and seniors. Today, through federal and other resources, the CHA assists approximately 35,000 families who participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program in private units owned by private landlords. In addition, the CHA owns 15,500 units for families in scattered site, traditional public housing or mixed income developments and 9,500 units of housing for senior citizens in 56 senior developments across the city.

About the Plan for Transformation

In 1999, the City of Chicago began a multi-billion dollar, 15-year initiative to renovate or replace the CHA's entire portfolio of 25,000 public housing units throughout the city. Currently, 61percent of the units have been completed, including the comprehensive renovation of the entire senior developments and scattered-site stock. Eighty percent of the portfolio is scheduled to be complete by 2009. The Plan is a collaboration between the CHA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Chicago and its many agencies, area businesses and non-profit organizations.