



Martin Nesbitt
Chairperson

Board of Commissioners

Hallie Amey
Dr. Mildred Harris
Michael Ivers
Samuel Mendenhall
Bridget O'Keefe
Carlos Ponce
Mary E. Wiggins
Sandra Young

Lewis A. Jordan
Chief Executive Officer

Scott Ammarell
General Counsel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Adaku Onyeka – CHA Office of Communications
(312) 913-7482; onyeka@thecha.org
Cydney Irving Dasent – Operation Warm
(610) 388-6305; cydney@operationwarm.org

Operation Warm, CHA Distribute 4,000 Winter Coats for Children *New Winter Coats Help Families During Tough Financial Times*

CHICAGO (November 3rd, 2008) – During difficult economic times, even the most everyday items can put a family over their budget, leading too many families to question whether they should pay their rent or feed their family. With this in mind, the Chicago Housing Authority, in partnership with Operation Warm, a national non-profit committed to keeping children healthy and warm each winter, distributed 4,000 new winter coats to families renting in CHA developments.

Operation Warm provides new winter coats to children in need through strategic partnerships with donors and community organizations. Its vision is that every child wearing a new winter coat is healthy, able to attend school regularly, and has strong self-esteem. They encourage each child to believe that, “I am of value.” Families signed up for the coat distribution through the CHA’s Office of Resident Services, and all leaseholders were required to provide their client ID number and the birth certificate of each child receiving a coat to ensure they are in fact a CHA resident.

“More than 1,500 CHA families are benefitting from the distribution of new winter coats today,” said CHA CEO Lewis Jordan. “We are gratified that leaseholders are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the partnerships in place as part of the Plan for Transformation.”

Also at the event, held at the new Fosco Park Field House – a model of change taking place on the Near West Side as part of the Plan for Transformation – leaseholders were able to learn more about education and job training programs, utility bill assistance, home weatherization tips, child care and more at a service fair organized by the CHA and Chicago Department of Human Services. Representatives from the FamilyWorks program, City Colleges of Chicago, Action for Children and more were present at the service fair.

“With every family working to save money in this economy, we are thrilled to be working with the CHA to help leaseholders keep their families warm this winter while staying on budget,” said Operation Warm President Kim Fremont Fortunato. “It is our vision is to ensure that every child is healthy, able to attend school, full of self-esteem and warm each winter.”

The Chicago Initiative of Operation Warm – which helped provide coats for CHA leaseholders – was also made possible by assistance from their partner, global business insurer CNA.

“Although wages for residents living in CHA developments, mixed-income communities and scattered site units are up, some residents are still in-need of extra training or bill assistance. I urge everyone to take advantage of all of our programs,” Jordan continued.

This year, Operation Warm is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a purchase of 140,000 new winter coats – the largest distribution since their inception in 1998. The new winter coats will be distributed to children in eight major geographic regions including the states of Pennsylvania and Delaware, with concentrated urban efforts in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New York City, and Seattle. At year end 2008, Operation Warm will have distributed 500,000 new winter coats to children in need in its first decade.

For more information on Operation Warm or to make a donation, visit their website at www.OperationWarm.org.

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, 67 percent 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.

###