



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YMCA Hosts 35th Annual Black & Hispanic Achievers Recognition & Scholarship Celebration

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago to award scholarships; honor volunteers, civic and corporate leaders for commitment to successful achievement of Chicago youth

CHICAGO – Members of Chicago’s corporate and civic community today joined dozens of Chicago students, their families and YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago leadership at Hotel 71 for the YMCA’s 35th Annual Black & Hispanic Achievers Recognition & Scholarship Celebration. The event honored YMCA volunteers and corporate and civic partners for their contributions to the success and development of Chicago youth and recognized the achievements of three outstanding Chicago students with \$1,500 college scholarships.

Themed “Sharing Our Stories” and emceed by NBC 5 Chicago Entertainment Reporter LeeAnn Trotter, the celebration also marked the 35th anniversary of the YMCA’s Black & Hispanic Achievers program (BAHA) in Chicago.

“It is with great pride that we celebrate 35 successful years of developing and inspiring tomorrow’s leaders through the Black & Hispanic Achievers program here in Chicago,” said Fran Bell, YMCA Vice President of Government & Community Relations. “It is because of the tremendous support and dedication of our volunteers and corporate and civic partners that we are able to make such an important difference in the lives of our youth and for that we are truly grateful.”

One of the YMCA’s many Human Services programs, BAHA is part of a national college readiness program that fosters the academic, personal and career development of African-American and Latino youth in 7th-12th grades. By providing culturally based activities that offer opportunities for interaction between youth and adult role models, as well as opportunities to explore higher education and career options, BAHA aims to help today’s youth become tomorrow’s leaders. Through BAHA, the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago helps youth build a positive sense of self and character, raises academic standards for youth and recognizes and promotes achievement—both of youth and of African-American and Latino adults in the community.

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“Today’s celebration is extra special because through the generosity of Comcast and Milhouse Engineering we are also awarding three of our phenomenal BAHA students college scholarships,” said LaDawn Norwood, YMCA Director of Youth Development. “These students truly represent the hope for the future that the BAHA program was founded on and we wish them and the rest of our 2009 BAHA graduating class great success as they embark on their college careers.”

The 2009 Black & Hispanic Achievers recognition award recipients are:

CIVIC PARTNER AWARD

BILLY OCASIO

Billy Ocasio currently served as a senior advisor to the Governor of Illinois and is the former Alderman of Chicago’s 26th Ward. He is a lifelong resident of Humboldt Park who is celebrated for his long career in public service working at various non-profits and community-based agencies in the fields of education, affordable housing, youth programs, and economic development. Prior to his new role as senior advisor to Governor Pat Quinn, he served as Alderman of the 26th Ward for 16 years and fought for education reform, affordable housing and responsible community development. Mr. Ocasio knows the impact that sustainable jobs have on individual opportunity and has been an essential partner for all of those concerned about the promise and future of Chicago’s youth.

CORPORATE PARTNER AWARDS

COMCAST

Comcast and its employees “power dreams in our communities” by providing access to innovative technology, volunteering their time and giving financial support. Since 2001, Comcast has provided \$1.4 billion in cash and in-kind support to non-profits serving thousands of individuals across the country. Locally, Comcast partners with the YMCA through its “Comcast Cares Day” and has provided a generous grant to help the YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program launch an expanded recruitment and awareness campaign in the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 school years.

MILHOUSE ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

Milhouse Engineering & Construction employs 60 professionals in five divisions – civil design, construction engineering, water/wastewater, mechanical/electrical/plumbing and information technology. Personally and through his business, Wilbur Milhouse, president & CEO of Milhouse Engineering & Construction, emphasizes community involvement and provides opportunities for others, supporting many programs and co-establishing the Milhouse Engineering Computer Scholarship. The company’s philosophy is “Milhouse – we do it right the first time” and the YMCA thanks Wilbur Milhouse for doing the right thing through his generous 2009 support that is helping to make scholarship awards a part of this 35th anniversary celebration.

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VOLUNTEER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

DAVID ANYADIKE, M.D.

Dr. David Anyadike is a general pediatrician working with Pilsen Community Pediatrics on Chicago's near-west side. Since his training at Meharry Medical College, he has actively pursued family health and mentoring opportunities including programs like the Black and Hispanic Achievers. He also co-founded the YMCA's Healthy Kids Summer Camps and has piloted a bilingual project called "Healthy Hearts" that provides resources, teaching and Y memberships to families coping with unhealthy habits. David is in his eighth year of volunteering with BAHA, is a presenter and serves on the health and medicine steering committee, and has recruited many new volunteers to the program.

LARISSA D. CAMACHO

Larissa Camacho is a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, following service as a police officer in Orlando, Florida, and serves as the Human Service Coordinator and the Hispanic Affairs Coordinator/Liaison for the Chicago Field Office. She has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's in public administration and during seven years in the FBI has served on the West Suburban Violent Gang Task Force, focusing primarily on Latin King gang investigations. Agent Camacho is in her third year of BAHA service and has attracted many volunteers to the program in addition to presenting to students and serving on the law enforcement steering committee.

DELMAR GILLUS, JR.

Delmar Gillus is Senior Manager, Internal Operations – Learning, Talent & Communications of the Health Care Service Corporation. He has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and an MBA and has worked for Bell Helicopter and RWD Technologies. In addition to his service as a volunteer with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Delmar was president of his undergraduate chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers and continues to be active as a society alumnus. Delmar is in his second year as a BAHA volunteer and, in addition to being a donor to the program, is active as a presenter and member of the engineering steering committee.

JUAN VALENZUELA

Sgt. Juan Valenzuela has played many professional roles during his ten years of service with the Illinois State Police including control and arrest tactics instructor, field training officer, range firearms instructor, field recruiter and Hispanic Community Liaison Officer. A native of Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood, Sgt. Valenzuela serves as Treasurer for the Hispanic Illinois Law Enforcement Association and is a board member of the Illinois State Police Heritage Foundation. He is in his third year as a BAHA volunteer and, in addition to being an active presenter and member of the law enforcement steering committee, has recruited many volunteers to BAHA.

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The 2009 Black & Hispanic Achievers scholarship recipients are:

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

RACHEL V. BRADLEY

Rachel Bradley attended Bogan Computer Technical High School, where she graduated with the Class of 2009. For three years she served as a Peer Mentor, eventually rising to the rank of Vice President. In 2008, Rachel was selected to be a member of the Teen Planning Committee for the 2008 Black and Hispanic Achievers Midwest Teen Summit in Chicago. A member of BAHA since her sophomore year, Rachel was proud to accept admission to the University of Arizona. There, she will major in communications and journalism in preparation for a career in public relations.

LISA M. FORD

Lisa Ford is a 2009 graduate of CICS Longwood Academy, where she finished in the top 10 percent of her class. A BAHA participant since her freshman year, Lisa served two years as a Youth Alderman in the YMCA City Youth and Government Program (CYG) and, last summer, completed an internship at the UIC Medical Center. In the fall, Lisa will begin her studies in biology (pre-medicine track) at Eastern Illinois University. After establishing herself as a leader in obstetrics, Lisa aims to open up her own clinic for women who cannot afford the high price of medical care.

TOMMIE L. ROBINSON, III

DR. CLINTON BRISTOW, JR. SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Tommie Robinson has been a BAHA participant since his sophomore year. He is a member of the 2009 graduating class at Bogan Computer Technical High School. At Bogan, Tommie ran track and cross-country. In his senior year, Tommie served as President of Bogan Peer Mentors and President Pro Tempore of the YMCA City Youth and Government Program (CYG). Tommie has received a four-year partial scholarship to attend The University of Findlay, where he will study political science. He intends to pursue a career in law and politics.

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The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago's Human Services programs encompass a number of initiatives for youth and the community, from providing child care services and community programming for youth and adults to gang intervention and prevention and programming that fosters the academic and career development of area youth.

Through its 65 locations and more than 100 extension sites, the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago helps children learn and grow, teaches young people to lead, brings families closer, and encourages individual health and well-being. The fourth largest non-profit in Chicago and one of the largest human services organizations in the nation, YMCA programs impact hundreds of thousands of lives annually, helping to strengthen neighborhoods and respond to community needs across Chicagoland. To learn more, visit www.ymcachgo.org.

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