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Press Release & Photo Op

80,000 Hours of Service Give Cause for Celebration

Charter One and WITS Honor Outstanding Volunteerism in Chicago Public Schools

Over two hundred Chicago Public Schools (CPS) volunteers and friends will gather in celebration at the Chicago Cultural Center on Wednesday, June 10 from 5:00-6:30pm for Working in the Schools' (WITS) inaugural Founders Day Award Reception. Generously underwritten by Charter One Bank, WITS will host this reception in honor of founders, Marion Stone and the late Joanne Alter. In celebration of the WITS mission, twelve outstanding volunteers will be recognized for their inspiring commitment and dedication to the students of CPS.

One such honoree, Dawn Meyers, will be recognized for her longstanding dedication to the students of Peabody School. A volunteer for six years now, Dawn first joined the WITS volunteer force through her employer, Northern Trust – who participates as a Corporate Volunteer Partner. Encouraged by Northern Trust's partnership with WITS, Dawn saw the opportunity to volunteer during her work day and to combine two things she loves – reading and children. But Dawn has taken her role as a reading buddy one step further; she organizes class field trips, plans holiday parties, and collects books and school supplies for all the students in her adopted classroom.

“One of the things I most admire about Dawn is how she really makes sure the students understand the importance of a good education,” Pam Nicandro, a fourth-grade teacher at Peabody explains. “Every one of her tutees has expressed to me that Dawn always tells them how important education is and how valuable it is to go to college.”

The other honorees on June 10th include Chef Charlie Trotter of Charlie Trotter's, Kristen Strahorn of Credit Suisse, Nancy Gray, Tim Trotter, Lauren Thal, and JoAnne Robinson. The evening will be emceed by WITS Board member and advocate, Donna LaPietra of Kurtis Productions and include special performances from the Brown School Drum Line.

With more than 2,300 WITS volunteers in Chicago Public Schools, WITS will use this opportunity to highlight the amazing accomplishments of the 2008-09 school year – such as 80,000 volunteer hours - while sharing inspiring stories from the classrooms. “WITS' impact would not be possible without the unyielding dedication of all our volunteers. While it may appear as simple as reading one-on-one with students, our volunteers are helping to educate the future leaders of Chicago,” explains Jenné Myers, Executive Director of WITS.

WITS volunteer programs strive to bring area business, government, and community groups into the schools to read with elementary students during their most academically impressionable years of youth. Students in WITS programs continue to show an increase in their reading comprehension, vocabulary; and most importantly their reading attitudes and motivation!

“Charter One is proud to support this special occasion by celebrating the ongoing efforts and accomplishments of WITS,” said Stacey Sather, Senior Vice President and Director of Public Affairs for Charter One. “We invite other local businesses to join us in supporting these critical literacy programs through financial contributions or by participating in WITS' many volunteer opportunities.”

The event is FREE for WITS volunteers and friends, but RSVP is required to kristen@witschicago.org.

Working in the Schools (WITS) is a 501(c)3 organization that promotes literacy and the love of reading among Chicago's youth by providing one-on-one tutoring and mentoring programs. For more information, visit witschicago.org.

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