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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHA Residents Honored for Completion of  
Hospitality Academy, Economic Goals**  
*Program Prepares Residents for Jobs in Hotels, Restaurants*

CHICAGO (March 29, 2007) – Fifteen more Chicago Housing Authority residents were honored for their completion of the Hospitality Academy Training Program and for taking the first steps toward self-sufficiency for their families at a ceremony held Wednesday night at McCormick Place. The Hospitality Academy is a unique job training and placement program offered through a partnership between the CHA, the City Colleges of Chicago and the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority that prepares residents for careers at hotels, restaurants and venues such as Navy Pier and McCormick Place.

“With jobs in hotels and restaurants and at Navy Pier and McCormick Place almost in constant supply, with the training offered through the Hospitality Academy these graduates will enter the workforce with the skills necessary for success,” said CHA CEO Sharon Gist Gilliam. “I would like to personally congratulate these residents for their achievements and desire to attain self-sufficiency. I encourage residents to take advantage of the programs in place and set economic goals for the future.”

Graduation from the Hospitality Academy is dependent on students’ completion of two phases of learning. The first portion of training is an eight-week program, consisting of 30 hours of training per week where residents learn business ethics, business writing and professional presentation in the workplace. They are paid \$6.50 during this period and are encouraged to begin saving for the future. The second aspect of the Hospitality Academy is an 18-week internship where students learn-by-doing at job locations throughout Chicago. They also meet bi-weekly to learn team building and problem solving skills. By engaging residents in the internship program, the Hospitality Academy provides businesses with skilled workers ready to hit the ground running once hired.

Of the 15 residents, four celebrated their completion of training and eleven were honored for their transition from the classroom to the internship portion of training. Since June 2005, a total of 28 CHA residents have completed both phases of training with the Hospitality Academy and have moved on to employment.

“Our partnership with the CHA continues to be a great synergy as the majority of our Hospitality Academy graduates this spring were sponsored by the Chicago Housing Authority and their service connectors,” said Juan Ochoa, CEO of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority. “We are proud that our Hospitality Academy, now in

its 14th year, continues to be a results-driven program that offers CHA residents and others the opportunity to begin exciting careers in our city's thriving hospitality industry.”

The Hospitality Academy is only one of many job training programs available to CHA leaseholders through the Plan for Transformation. In addition to the training offered by the Hospitality Institute, partnerships between the City of Chicago’s Department of Human Services, the CHA, City Colleges, provide residents with free career training and internships in banking, cosmetology, trucking, medical services and the construction trades as well as remedial and adult basic education.

Since the Plan for Transformation began, more than 6,000 job placements have been made through the Workforce Development Initiative, nearly 50% of leaseholders are working and income among working families has risen from \$10,000 per year in 1999 to \$15,000 in 2006.

“Through our partners, the opportunities for residents to attain their economic goals are in place; the decision to take advantage lies in the hands of residents,” continued Gist Gilliam.

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**Note For Editors: Photos of the event are available at the following websites.**

**Photo #1: <http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/hospitalitymar.07a.jpg>**

**Suggested Caption: “Graduates from the Hospitality Academy, a partnership between the Chicago Housing Authority and Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, give themselves a round of applause for completion of the program at a ceremony held on Wednesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at McCormick Place.”**

**Photo #2: <http://www.mkcpr.com/filebin/hospitalitymar.07b.jpg>**

**Suggested Caption: “Members of the Hospitality Academy’s March 2007 graduating class B.E.A.R.S. – Being Educated And Reaching Success – are presented their certificates of completion at a ceremony held on Wednesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at McCormick Place.”**

**Photos are courtesy of the Chicago Housing Authority**