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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CHICAGO TEENS SHOW OFF THEIR TALENTS AT  
AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS® CITYWIDE SHOWCASE**

*Diverse skills on display in performing and visual arts, science and technology*

**CHICAGO -- April 9, 2014 --** After weeks of hard work and preparation, nearly 500 Chicago teens proudly displayed their skills and talents at the **After School Matters** Citywide Showcase, held at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance earlier this evening.

Teens from across the city demonstrated skills developed through participation in After School Matters programs during the past year in an extraordinary presentation of performing and visual arts, science and technology. Nationally recognized for providing hands-on, project-based after-school and summer programming focused on preparing teens for success in college, careers and beyond, After School Matters is the nation's largest out-of-school time initiative for high school students.

The evening's performances highlighted the wide variety of programming that After School Matters offers, including dance performances from the Latin and Spanish Dance Ensemble, Hi Def Dance Ensemble, Soul du Ballet & Such and After School Matters Dance Ensemble programs; vocal performances from Chicago Opera Theater for Teens and the Artist Development Program; a drumline performance from Queen Nzinga's Brigade; theatrical performances from the Southside Occupational Theater and The Business of Music programs; and a martial arts performance by the Leadership Apprenticeship Mentoring Program.

"The Citywide Showcase is evidence of the passion and determination of Chicago's teens," said Mary Ellen Caron, After School Matters Chief Executive Officer. "They never cease to amaze me with their conviction and hard work. What they accomplished tonight should make Chicago proud."

A Teen Gallery displayed throughout the theater lobby featured a variety of one-of-a-kind, teen-created artwork, jewelry, clothing, photography and more, all of which was available for purchase onsite with proceeds supporting After School Matters teen programs. The Teens-in-Action exhibition showcased hands-on, interactive displays from After School Matters aviation, forensics, science and urban gardening programs. Programs that participated in the Citywide Showcase come from neighborhoods throughout Chicago including Lawndale, South Shore, Austin, Belmont Cragin, the Loop, Garfield Park, Roseland and more.

Over the past two decades, close to 200,000 teens have participated in After School Matters' hands-on, project-based after-school and summer programs in the arts, science, sports, technology and communications. Programs take place at locations throughout the city including Chicago public high schools, community-based organizations and Downtown at the Gallery 37 Center for the Arts.

"Tonight is an incredibly exciting experience for me, performing on such a large stage in front of so many people," said Maricruz, a teen from the After School Matters Latin and Spanish Dance Ensemble in South Lawndale. "I honestly would not have the confidence to do what I'm doing now without After School Matters and my instructor. They've really inspired me and helped me to see what I can achieve." A junior at Juarez Community Academy High School, Maricruz has participated in multiple After School Matters programs, which research has shown increases the positive impact that these programs deliver.

Applications for After School Matters Summer programs, which begin June 23, are available now at [www.afterschoolmatters.org](http://www.afterschoolmatters.org). This summer, After School Matters will provide 8,000 program opportunities to teens across Chicago.

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