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Chicago Humanities Festival

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Chicago Humanities Festival Gala Benefit Raises More Than \$640,000

Honoring Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Northwestern University, University of Chicago, and University of Illinois

Chicago—October 11, 2013—The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) celebrated the humanities on **Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2013** with its annual **Gala Benefit** at the **Four Seasons Hotel Chicago**. The event was attended by 350 of Chicago's civic, corporate, and cultural leaders and raised more than \$640,000 to advance CHF's mission to create opportunities for people of all ages to support, enjoy, and explore the humanities. Specifically, more than \$120,000 was raised during the paddle raise, which will support CHF's **First Time for a Lifetime™** education and outreach initiatives, which support student attendance, teacher development, and education resources.

In anticipation of the 2013 Fall Festival under the theme **ANIMAL: What Makes Us Human**, the annual Gala Benefit took place at the **Four Seasons** where the ballroom was transformed into an animal-embellished sanctuary. Tables featured animal print table runners and floral arrangements adorned with peacock and pheasant feathers, all created by **Flower Firm**. Attendees enjoyed a wildly delicious three-course dinner provided by the **Four Seasons**, which included a dessert sampling with edible chocolate tigers and giraffes in homage to the theme. A variety of wines were served, including **Van Duzer Pinot Noir** which was provided by **CHF Board Member Marilyn Thoma and her husband Carl**.

After dinner, the Chicago Humanities Festival recognized **Robert R. McCormick Foundation** for its strong commitment to the humanities and its long-standing partnership with CHF. Current **CHF Board Chair Bill Fraumann** presented the honor to **President and Chief Executive Officer David D. Hiller**.

"We were delighted to be part of that very special evening," said David D. Hiller. "We have had a long and fruitful partnership, supporting educational efforts and celebrating those things that, in the words of this year's festival, make us human and humane."

Following the first award presentation, CHF saluted three key academic partners: **Northwestern University**, the **University of Chicago**, and the **University of Illinois**, who were honored as vital partners in CHF's mission to bring renowned pioneers and thinkers in literature, history, science, politics, art, and music to the Festival. Audience members enjoyed a video that featured interviews from key leaders at each of the universities, as well as CHF **Executive Director Phillip Bahar** and **Artistic Director Matti Bunzl**, and highlighted the respective campuses. **President Morton Schapiro** (Northwestern University), **President Robert J. Zimmer** (University of Chicago), and **President Robert A. Easter** (University of Illinois) received the award from Bill Fraumann on behalf of their respective universities.

"To have the three university presidents together at one time with David Hiller from the McCormick Foundation marked an extraordinary moment in the Chicago Humanities Festival's 24 year history," said CHF Artistic Director Matti Bunzl. "We were honored to have the opportunity to give our collective thanks to these longstanding partners."

Attendees were then treated to a video about **Stages, Sights and Sounds**, which documented the annual international theater festival for students, families, and theatergoers of any age. The video featured interviews with artists, cultural leaders, and students who attended performances this past May. Following the video, three teachers from **Schubert Elementary** spoke about their personal experience with the Stages, Sights and Sounds program and the positive impact it has had on their students.

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“It has been said that education is not about filling a pail, it’s about lighting the fire,” said Juana Miranda, a third grade bilingual teacher from Schubert. “Thank you for providing my students with the opportunity to experience the arts, and for striking the match.”

Lead by **CHF Board Member Cheryl Harris** and **Greg Dellinger**, the **First Time for a Lifetime™** paddle raise brought in more than \$120,000 to CHF’s education and outreach programs, which supports attendance to Festival programs and performances for teachers, students, and school groups in the form of ticket vouchers and bus stipends, and also includes educator professional development and resources to support classroom learning.

Closing out the night, **CHF Gala Benefit co-chair Allegra Biery** introduced the singers from the **Ryan Opera Center**, who performed several musical theater and operatic songs under the direction of **Andreas Mitisek, General Director of Chicago Opera Theater**. The performance was generously underwritten by a gift from **Julie and Roger Baskes**.

The Gala Benefit was spearheaded by co-chairs **Allegra Biery, Senior Vice President, Northern Trust** and **R. Scott Falk, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis**. Leadership commitments included: **Northern Trust, Kirkland & Ellis, Paul and Ellen Gignilliat, Elizabeth Nolan, Illinois Tool Works, Harrison and Lois Steans, The Allstate Corporation, and Robert R. McCormick Foundation**.

The Chicago Humanities Festival began in 1989 as a dream shared by a determined group of Chicago’s cultural leaders eager to extend the riches of the humanities to everyone. Since that first year, some of the world’s most exciting thinkers, artists and performers have come to Chicago each fall for a festival that celebrates ideas in the context of civic life. Past Festival themes include Love and Marriage, Crime and Punishment, Work and Play, Peace and War, Thinking Big, and this year’s **Animal: What Makes Us Human, Oct. 13, 20, and Nov. 1–10, 2013**. Under the leadership of **Executive Director Phillip Bahar** and **Artistic Director Matti Bunzl**, CHF partners with some of Chicago’s premier cultural institutions, and the festival has become an annual highlight for thousands of people from Chicago and beyond. In addition to the annual fall festival, CHF also presents the spring **Stages, Sights & Sounds**, a global performance festival for families and theatergoers of any age, and programs throughout the year that encourage the study and enjoyment of the humanities. For more information, please visit chicagohumanities.org.

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