



Summer 2011

ABRAHAM LINCOLN CENTRE
Always Linked to the Community

CENTRE FOCUS

Jennifer Hudson is Holiday Angel for ALC Youth



Jennifer Hudson sings to ALC children and their families.



Zirl Smith and Jennifer Hudson (above).

WGN-TV and The Jennifer Hudson Foundation in Honor of Julian King hosted a Holiday Toy Drive to benefit 800 ALC children. The program culminated with a celebration at Navy Pier's Winter WonderFest

on December 22, 2010 with performances by Jennifer Hudson, gospel choirs, a ballet dance troupe, and toys distributed personally by Jennifer Hudson to more than 800 ALC children and teens.

During the December 22nd celebration, Zirl Smith, ALC President & CEO presented Jennifer Hudson with a plaque marking the event and announcing Ms. Hudson as the Centre's 2011 Humanitarian of the Year. She will receive the award during the Annual Humanitarian Award Dinner held later this year. This prestigious award is being presented to Ms. Hudson in recognition of her community initiatives, support of children's organizations, and work with her **Jennifer Hudson Foundation in Honor of Julian King**. Named in honor of the singer-actress' late nephew Julian King, the Foundation seeks to help families who have lost relatives to a

violent crime, with basic needs including food, clothing and shelter as well as grief counseling.

ALC Launches New Web site

We are excited to announce the launch of the new ALC Web site. Enhanced features include easier access to program details and donor opportunities; a comprehensive calendar of Centre events; plus a fresh look and feel that is focused on servicing our communities. We invite you to visit the new Web site www.abelink.org today.



ALC children with Miss Black America.

Preceding the toy give-away, WGN-TV broadcast commercials inviting viewers to drop-off new unwrapped toys or monetary donations to multiple locations throughout the Chicagoland area. The Toy Drive collected approximately 3,000 toys and items, due in large part to the support from local businesses.

Program Highlights

New Program Assists Homeless Families Living in Shelters

The Abraham Lincoln Centre (ALC) continuously seeks out ways to help residents of its communities, especially during times of increased homelessness and limited education funding. One such program designed to assist families confronted with these challenges, is the ALC's Home Based Head Start Outreach offered at homeless shelters. Launched a year ago, this program brings early childhood education to children living in shelters on Chicago's south side. Children ages 3–5, who may not otherwise qualify for subsidized headstart education because they are homeless, can receive quality instruction.

The ALC deploys certified teachers to the shelters to deliver the approved curriculum, which consists of creative learning techniques, music, art and fun. Each child receives one-on-one and group instruction with the teacher for 1.5 hours per day. Parents are always present during the lessons and are welcome to participate. "The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and the Abraham Lincoln Centre are committed to providing quality child care to pre-school aged children, regardless of their family situation. The Home Based Head Start program is testament to this commitment. Every child, regardless of where they live, is entitled to a quality education. By providing Head Start services in homeless shelters, the Abraham Lincoln Centre is reaching some of the most vulnerable children and families in the city. We are proud to be a part of such a remarkable endeavor," states Andria Russaw, Director of Child, Youth and Adult Services.

For continuity of development, the program follows the child when the family has been able to relocate to permanent housing. Teachers continue providing instruction until the child is able to enroll in another Head Start program. "Our Home Based educators have noted that the children and parents are benefitting greatly from the regular, individualized educational programming and social service support that this partnership provides. In essence, this program brings the center based Head Start model to the child's home setting," per Ms. Russaw.

The homeless shelter program is entering its second year, providing Pre-K learning to 23 kids in two shelters on Chicago's south side. Plans are underway to extend the instructions to an additional shelter in 2011, as funding permits. Please donate now to this invaluable program, by visiting our Web site at www.abelink.org and select the "Donate Now" button; or send correspondence to the Abraham Lincoln Centre, Attn: Development, 3858 S. Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago, IL 60653.



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**—Andria Russaw,
Director of Child, Youth and Adult Services**

Giving Back is Win-Win!

Deborah Brown, Director, Station Relations for NBC Chicago, has been an enthusiastic advocate and volunteer for the Abraham Lincoln Centre (ALC) for more than two years. Through direct involvement in the youth program, event planning, and garnering corporate support from NBC-5, Ms. Brown has made a considerable positive impact on the lives ALC clients and supporters.

If Ms. Brown were not working at NBC, she would be a teacher. "I love knowing that my energy, efforts and time can positively impact the lives of young people..." states Brown. This passion for youth outreach was evident in the etiquette classes she conducted for the young ladies at the Centre. The interactive sessions provided the teens with basic knowledge of self-presentation, and an appreciation for the importance of universally recognized decorum. The program included an exciting field trip to NBC Tower, where the group was given an opportunity to take a behind the scenes look at a television station.

Mentoring the ALC youth was just the tip of the iceberg. Ms. Brown's support had a broader reach through her work on the planning committee for the ALC's Annual Humanitarian Award Dinner. She secured NBC-5's Daryl Hawks to serve as emcee for the program honoring the great Gayle Sayers in 2009, and Christian Farr for the program in 2010. Due to Ms. Brown's support for the ALC, NBC-5

was the agency's media sponsor for the award dinner, resulting in significant increased awareness of our programs throughout the community.

The Abraham Lincoln Centre is grateful to Ms. Brown for her dedication and support of the agency. Volunteers like her are how the organization maintains the high quality of service our communities deserve. When asked what motivates her to donate her time, Ms. Brown simply states "Giving back is in my DNA. So I'm lucky that my expenditure of time, energy and treasure is not something I even question. However, for those who struggle with giving back or can't seem to find the time or energy, I say: ROI, honey! The return of your investment of time, energy, treasure and talents will be three-fold. I say this so emphatically because I know it. You will get so much more from giving back, than you will ever be able to give. That's a win-win."

Visit us at www.abelink.org, and access the *How You Can Help* section of our Web site.



**Deborah Brown,
Director of Station
Relations, NBC-5**

Annual Humanitarian Award Dinner

Abraham Lincoln Centre Honors Chicago Board of Education President Mary Richardson-Lowry



On October 22, 2010, Mary Richardson-Lowry, Chicago Board of Education President, and Partner with Mayer Brown, was honored as the "2010 Humanitarian of the Year" during the Annual Awards Dinner.



Master of Ceremonies Christian Farr of NBC-5 News (above).

Held at the Fairmont Hotel Chicago, the gala event hosted nearly 400 of Chicago's business executives, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and ALC clients and sponsors.



The program agenda included exciting live and silent auctions, profound presentations by ALC youth and event supporters.



Pictured left to right: Zirl S. Smith, President & CEO; ALC Teens Curtis Henry and Shaquitta Smith; Mary Richardson-Lowry; and Maurice Grant, Board Chairman.

EVENT SPONSORS INCLUDED:

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- NBC-5
- Neiman Marcus
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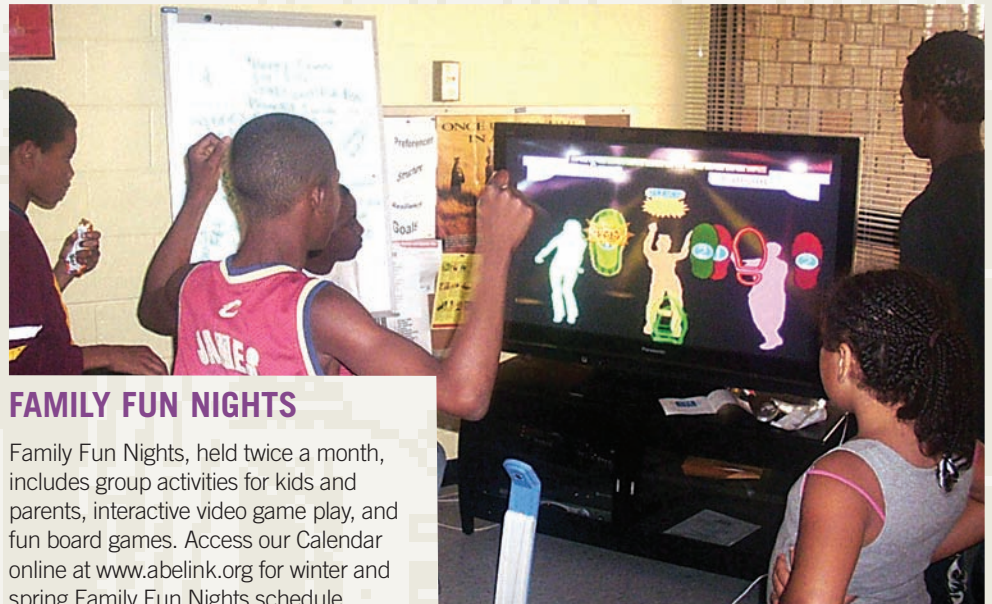
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Around the ALC



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE & CREATE THE GOOD

ALC's *Healthy Lifestyle* and *Create the Good* programs hosted a joint Holiday Celebration on December 15, 2010. The programs, sponsored by AARP, provides Cooking Demonstrations, Computer Training, Line Dancing, Yoga and much more.



FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

Family Fun Nights, held twice a month, includes group activities for kids and parents, interactive video game play, and fun board games. Access our Calendar online at www.abelink.org for winter and spring Family Fun Nights schedule.

