A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I hope you and your loved ones enjoyed a wonderful holiday season. While I don’t often make New Year’s resolutions, I have resolved in 2015 to work even harder to broaden the impact of the Chicago Urban League on those who are looking for the opportunity to succeed educationally, economically and socially. Thanks to your ongoing support, we are on track to do just that.

In this issue of Empower we recap the 53rd Annual Golden Fellowship Dinner, one of our most successful galas on record. We also take a look back at the 2014 gubernatorial debate we presented in partnership with the Business Leadership Council, CBS 2 Chicago and WVON. You will read about events that supported small business owners and our successful onsite hiring events.

This issue recaps our recent holiday events with the youth we serve in middle school, high school and college. Our Partner Spotlight features Nicor Gas and its vice president of operations, Anthony McCain, strong supporters of our work. You can learn more about Anthony and Nicor Gas’ commitment to the Urban League in our Q&A with him.

Another update you don’t want to miss is a special visit National Urban League President and CEO, Marc H. Morial made to the Chicago Urban League to reaffirm the National Urban League’s support of our programs and advocacy that helps people find jobs, strengthen businesses and provides a pathway to empowerment to the formerly incarcerated. We are honored to be one of the National Urban League’s “Jobs Rebuild America” cities.

Please join us on Thursday, April 30, 2015, for our 2015 SUMMIT Luncheon, featuring keynote speaker Selim A. Bassoul, Chairman and CEO of The Middleby Corporation. This year’s SUMMIT theme is ‘Transformational Change: Igniting the Entrepreneurial Spirit’ and it promises to be an inspiring and insightful event.

Thank you again for reading Empower and for your commitment to the Chicago Urban League. I wish you all the best in 2015.

Yours in the movement,

Andrea L. Zopp
President & CEO

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Nicor Gas Partner Spotlight
3 GFD Review
4 Sip & Shop Networking Event
5 Target Hiring Event
6 Children’s Holiday Party
7 Auction Seminars Highlights
8 Moving Forward
PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

For more than 24 years, Nicor Gas has partnered with the Chicago Urban League, providing significant financial support for the League’s signature fundraising events. In late 2013, Nicor Gas generously supported the Chicago Urban League’s Entrepreneurship Center for the creation and launch of the Business Diversity Procurement Portal.

Below, Anthony McCain, vice president, Nicor Gas Operations, and Chicago Urban League Board member, discusses Nicor Gas and its commitment to corporate social responsibility, the company’s giving philosophy, and ‘Investing in Illinois: A Nicor Gas System Improvement Initiative’.

Nicor Gas is a champion of programs and initiatives that educate, enlighten, engage and inspire - can you speak to your commitment to corporate social responsibility?

Our employees are guided by a corporate-wide value that there is more than a good way to do business – there is a right way. This value – called Generosity of Spirit – is demonstrated through programs that help customers reduce their energy costs, preserve and protect the environment, ensure a diverse workforce and supplier base, invest in education, and enhance the communities we serve.

Like the Chicago Urban League, Nicor Gas has a long history of growing our economy and benefitting communities in Illinois. Can you share a bit about your corporate giving philosophy?

We take great pride in our more than 150-year history here in Illinois and our commitment to the communities where our customers and employees live, work and raise their families. The entire team at Nicor Gas and AGL Resources [Nicor Inc. and AGL Resources merged in December 2011] is mindful of this commitment in all aspects of our work – from workforce development and corporate social responsibility, to supplier and workforce diversity. It is important that we maintain a keen awareness of issues affecting our communities and our business and that we show our corporate citizenship through donations of time, talent and treasure. We hold ourselves accountable for doing business the right way. That means living our corporate values and giving back to the communities we serve. We work hard to be a company with which all of our stakeholders — employees, customers, investors and neighbors — are proud to be connected.

Can you tell our readers about the most recent collaboration between Nicor Gas and the Chicago Urban League - and how they can take part?

We are proud to sponsor the Chicago Urban League and its ongoing work to build strong sustainable African American communities and create opportunities with the power to transform people's lives. Nicor Gas most recently partnered with the Chicago Urban League to launch a new web-based portal (contractsandconnections.com) that connects diverse suppliers with business opportunities offered by companies in Illinois and makes it easier for businesses to find diverse vendors. We see this portal as an important tool in our ongoing supplier diversity efforts as well as our investing in illinois: A Nicor Gas System Improvement Initiative as we work with vendors, suppliers and contractors to accelerate the modernization of aging natural gas infrastructure. This portal presents a great opportunity for Illinois businesses and I encourage everyone reading this piece to go to the website now to learn more and register.
Themed, *Opportunity, Community, Impact: A Movement that Matters*, the Chicago Urban League hosted its 53rd Annual Golden Fellowship Dinner on Saturday, November 15, 2014. The dinner was headlined by one of the most respected and multi-faceted performers in the entertainment industry, Vanessa Williams. Co-chairs of the dinner were Cheryl Pearson-McNeil, SVP U.S. Strategic Community Alliances and Consumer Engagement at Nielsen, and Stephen E. Thomas, Area Vice President of Field Operations at Comcast. Governor Pat Quinn and Cook County President, Toni Preckwinkle both welcomed guests with brief remarks.

Clyde Ross, a Chicago homeowner and housing activist, and the incomparable Jessye Norman, one of the most admired contemporary opera singers and recitalists in the world, were the honored recipients of the Edwin C. “Bill” Berry Civil Rights Award. Each gave moving speeches about persistence, and dedication that brought the room to its feet for standing ovations. Ms. Norman surprised the room with an impromptu performance, singing a verse of the gospel classic ‘This Little Light of Mine’.

Through the introduction of an interactive portion of the evening, the Chicago Urban League raised $50,000 through the Jim Reynolds Live Challenge. Reynolds matched dollar-for-dollar money raised during the program via smart phone technology. In total, this year’s Dinner raised nearly $2 million to support Chicago Urban League programming.

The 54th Annual Golden Fellowship Dinner, is scheduled to be held on Saturday, November 7, 2015, at the Hilton Chicago. For information on sponsorship opportunities contact Erika Soria, Development Officer, at esoria@thechicagourbanleague.org or visit www.TheChicagoUrbanLeague.org.
SMALL BUSINESS SIP & SHOP

On Saturday, November 29, 2014, the Chicago Urban League’s Entrepreneurship Center celebrated Small Business Saturday by hosting its second annual Small Business Saturday Sip & Shop, to promote and support the growth of local, small businesses. More than 150 shoppers attended and made purchases from 24 small business vendors and micro-entrepreneurs.

Shoppers enjoyed coffee and tea from Fleck’s Café as they visited the businesses in attendance. Thrive Candle Co. was a first-time vendor, selling organic candles made with renewable soy wax grown and made in the United States. Jimmy Guzmán of Senor Dapper returned to this annual event to sell his handmade bowties and cravats. Other vendors sold custom-made apparel, hand-made jewelry, gourmet foods, bath and body products, and custom designed holiday gift baskets. Several vendors also conducted holiday cookie and craft demonstrations to market their products.

“The Chicago Urban League’s Small Business Saturday Sip & Shop was an amazing event. The layout was great and there were so many wonderful and unique vendors. We sold more than 75% of our product and can’t wait for next year’s Sip & Shop,” said Rachel Bernier-Green, a vendor from ‘Laine’s Bake Shop.

For more information about the Entrepreneurship Center’s programs and events, like the Small Business Saturday Sip & Shop, contact Selena Sizemore, Director of Entrepreneurship, at ssizemore@thechicagourbanleague.org. For more information about Small Business Saturday and the Shop Small movement visit https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/Shop-Small/.

HOLIDAY NETWORKING

On Tuesday, December 16, 2014, the Chicago Urban League’s Education Department hosted its annual Holiday Networking Party. The evening brought together 33 current and former Education program participants and Chicago Urban League scholarship recipients for a night of networking, games and fun. Past scholarship recipients gave tips on the application process to current high school students and shared about life at college with their peers.

“I enjoyed the networking activity that required us to meet at least three new people, because it meant making new connections with other students and young professionals,” said Derielle Pinckney, a Biology major and Junior at Alabama A&M University.

Eight young professionals from Chicago Urban League partner companies also attended the event to network with the students; sharing insights into their career paths and tips on navigating through college. Partnering companies included; The PrivateBank, Ernst & Young LLP, Schiff Hardin LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, United Airlines and BMO Harris Bank.

“At the Holiday Networking Party, students and professionals come together to share their experiences and to develop relationships that carry over into the new year and beyond,” said Danielle Parker, Director of the Education Department.

For more information about the Education Department and their programs and activities, contact Danielle Parker, Director of Education, at dparker@thechicagourbanleague.org, or visit www.TheChicagoUrbanLeague.org.
On Saturday, December 13, 2014, the Chicago Urban League’s Human Capital and Education Departments hosted the annual Children’s Holiday Party at the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center for more than 200 youth from the departments’ programs; Urban Youth Connection (UYC), Project Ready, Young Investor/Entrepreneur Project, as well as participants from the Student Mission to China. “We’re so glad to have you here because you are an important part of our Urban League family,” said Andrea L. Zopp, President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League in her welcome to the youth and their families. Zopp spoke about respecting one another and continuing to work hard in school before she thanked supporters of the event, the Eraang Group, Home Depot and the Chicago Urban League auxiliary groups; the Women’s Board and The Leaguers.

Returning as volunteers included staff from Home Depot, who assisted the youth with decorating holiday cookies and creating holiday ornaments. Home Depot also donated Christmas trees to be raffled off to families in attendance.

“The partnership between the Chicago Urban League and Home Depot has continued to develop over time,” said Russell Johnson Cochran, Regional Manager, Associate Relations at the Home Depot. “It’s a great way to bring in employees from different stores, to expose them to the community-supporting activities going on at the Chicago Urban League.”

This year, WGCI DJs, Loni Swain and UB Rodriguez, made a special appearance to help distribute holiday gifts and to applaud the youth for their involvement with Chicago Urban League programs. Local rapper Lil Kemo also attended to show his support for youth in the community and performed several songs to the ecstatic young crowd.

For more information on the Human Capital and Education Departments and program opportunities, contact Angela Bailey, Director of Human Capital, at abailey@thechicagourbanleague.org or Danielle Parker, Director of Education at dparker@thechicagourbanleague.org, or visit www.TheChicagoUrbanLeague.org.
Target Partners with the Chicago Urban League

In November 2014, as a part of their featured Employer of the Month initiative, the Chicago Urban League’s Workforce Development Department hosted two hiring fairs for Target. These hiring fairs represented the innovative ways in which the Workforce Development Department is working to strengthen its strategic partnerships with area employers while creating jobs for individuals in the community.

The Workforce Development Department helped guide clients through Target’s online application process for two Target stores in the Chicagoland area. Once the clients completed the application process, the Workforce Development Department prepared the clients for the hiring events by conducting mock interviews and on the day of interviews, provided professional attire for interviewees in need. The process of the on-site hiring fairs allowed Target to significantly shorten their standard hiring window and allowed Workforce Development participants to begin their new jobs sooner. At the first hiring event, the Chicago Urban League presented 75 candidates for interviews, 31 of which received job offers. Of the 45 clients interviewed at the second hiring event, 26 received job offers.

As a featured Employer of the Month of the Workforce Development Department, Target representatives served as guest presenters at ‘Success Strategies’, a work-readiness course that provides employability and life skills training. Target was then invited back to conduct on-site interviews for current job openings.

“Thanks to the Chicago Urban League, we were able to quickly staff more than 50 Seasonal Team Members needed for two of our stores. The Chicago Urban League orchestrated a successful on-site hiring event which allowed us to work smarter not harder to accomplish our staffing goals,” said Target Executive Team Leader-Human Resources, Suzanne Griffin. “I look forward to this ongoing partnership for our future staffing needs, not only for my store, but for our district as well.”

The hiring fairs included a range of jobs, from entry level to those requiring a professional degree. A professional degree holder was hired to Target’s Human Resources Department and another was hired as a manager. While the majority of the positions were for seasonal work, Target representatives have informed the Workforce Development Department of its intent to keep many of the employees for permanent work due to the potential for growth within their positions.

For more information about the Workforce Development Department, contact Clayton Pryor, Director of Workforce Development, at cpryor@thechicagourbanleague.org. For more information on upcoming hiring fairs for Target and other employer partners, contact Karen Coleman, Manager of Employment Services, at kcoleman@thechicagourbanleague.org or visit www.TheChicagoUrbanLeague.org.
Hudson & Marshall Auction Prep

On Tuesday, November 11, 2014, and on Wednesday, December 3, 2014, the Chicago Urban League’s Housing Department co-hosted a Pre-Auction Educational Seminar with one of the most well-regarded real estate auction firms in the country, Hudson & Marshall. Focusing on responsible homeownership and understanding the auction process, the seminars prepared individuals who were interested in learning about bidding on neighborhood properties at the Chicago-area auction held on Saturday, December 13, 2014 at the Chicago Marriott at Burr Ridge.

“Our goal for the Pre-Auction Seminar is two-fold: to raise awareness in Chicago’s urban community that Hudson & Marshall auctions are a viable option to purchase affordable real estate, and to demystify the auction process so that people are not intimidated by its quick-moving nature,” said James Cromartie, Extended Outreach Marketing Consultant at Hudson & Marshall. “The Chicago Urban League was instrumental in achieving those goals. When the Housing Department extends invitations to the community, the community responds because they trust the Chicago Urban League to deliver worthwhile information.”

Hudson & Marshall conducts real estate auctions and liquidations across the country, and in collaboration with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), conducted community outreach initiatives aimed at buyers, investors and tenants prior to the Chicago auction. Mortgage lenders were present at the seminars, providing information on financing. More than 50 individuals attended the seminars and learned how to purchase a property from auction, the tenant-landlord relationship rules, and participated in a mock-auction to become comfortable with the fast-paced and high-pressure atmosphere.

“The Chicago Urban League continues to promote new strategies that will increase homeownership and investment options in our communities that create safe, decent, and affordable housing,” said Margaret Wooten, Senior Director of Housing at the Chicago Urban League.

For more information on the Chicago Urban League’s Housing Department and its events, contact Margaret Wooten Senior Director of Housing, at mwooten@thechicagourbanleague.org, or visit www.TheChicagoUrbanLeague.org.

Program & Event Highlights

The Chicago Urban League, in partnership with the Business Leadership Council, CBS 2 Chicago and WVON, hosted a gubernatorial debate at the DuSable Museum.

Andrea L. Zopp, President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League, and Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League at the ‘Jobs Rebuild America’ event in November, 2014.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle speaking with the IMPACT Program fellows about leadership and her responsibilities, during the monthly ‘Lessons In Leadership’ series.
2/2/15  
**Workforce Development ‘Success Strategies’**  
Chicago Urban League, 10am-3pm

2/3/15  
**Black History Month Film Festival - “The ‘N’ Word-Divided We Stand”**  
Chicago Urban League, 6pm

2/10/15  
**Mayoral Debate**  
DuSable Museum of African American History, 6pm

2/12/15  
**Black History Month Film Festival - “Afraid of the Dark”**  
Chicago Urban League, 6pm

2/17/15  
**nextSTEP/CHA Business Plan Presentation**  
Chicago Urban League, 6pm-8pm

2/17/15  
**Black History Month Film Festival - “Smile”**  
Chicago Urban League, 6pm

2/24/15  
**Black History Month Film Festival - “The Homestretch”**  
Chicago Urban League, 6pm

2/24/15  
**Buy Black/Buy Local Event**  
Parkway Ballroom, 3pm-7pm

3/26/15  
**Business Resource Fair**  
Chicago Urban League, 8am-12:30pm

3/26/15  
**Parent Engagement Program Workshop - ‘Entrepreneurship’**  
Chicago Urban League, 5:30pm-7:30pm