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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 21, 2012

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**MORE THAN FOUR MILLION PEOPLE ATTEND CHICAGO'S SIGNATURE FREE SUMMER EVENTS
AND FESTIVALS**

Events and Festivals Achieved an Increase in Attendance and Revenue

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) produced and presented the City's six major festivals and events achieving an increase in attendance and revenue.

"Chicago came to life this summer, filled with the smells of our world-class cuisine, the spectacle of our thrilling air show, and the sounds of our greatest musicians - all free of charge," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "More than four million residents and tourists were able to enjoy our festivals, programs and events and experience all Chicago has to offer."

"We are pleased to have produced and presented six major signature festivals and a series of other dynamic programs and events for residents and visitors throughout the summer season," said Commissioner Michelle T. Boone. "We are looking forward to planning the 2013 season which will include milestone celebrations of the Chicago Blues Festival (30 years), Chicago Air and Water Show (55 years) and the 35th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival."

In the beginning of summer season in early June, Chicago welcomed blues fans from all over the world for three days of blues music on five different stages at the free admission 29th Annual Chicago Blues Festival. After a weekend of perfect weather and a visit from former President Bill Clinton the result was an estimated crowd of more than 500,000 people and a 26 percent increase in food and beverage sales, with total ticket sales jumping to \$760,376 from \$602,768 in 2011.

Highlights of the Blues Festival included headliners Texas Johnny Brown on Friday, Floyd Taylor on Saturday and the legendary Mavis Staples closed the festival on Sunday night. The 2012 festival also celebrated the genre's heritage with tributes to Lightnin' Hopkins, David "Honeyboy" Edwards, Koko Taylor and Hubert Sumlin.

In late June, The Chicago Gospel Music Festival returned to the summer lineup after a year hiatus. Returning to the genre's roots in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, this year's festival was held in Ellis Park (other LOCATIONS were Millennium Park and the Chicago Cultural Center) where an estimated 25,000 attended to enjoy live music on two stages including many local performers from the area, which gave the four-day festival an estimated crowd of over 30,000 people.

Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood is where Gospel Music pioneer Thomas A. Dorsey lived and first performed this musical genre.

The McDonald's Inspiration Celebration Gospel Tour brought Fred Hammond, along with J Moss and Byron Cage to the festival and Sunday's triple bill was Take 6, Blind Boys of Alabama and Mary Mary, which provided the added BENEFIT of filming the event for the group's reality show on the WE network.

Eli's Cheesecake sold nearly 19,000 slices of Eli's Cheesecake while Bobak's sold enough Sausage to reach the top of Willis Tower and back to the ground and the Tacos from Carbon were flying out at a rate of 900 per hour. That would indicate the success of the new five-day version of Taste of Chicago, held July 11 -15, as the event drew an estimated 1.2 million attendees, an increase of 5000 people per day from 2011.

Several new elements helped to make Taste a success including the Pop-Ups, where each day three new restaurants appeared and the sold-out Celebrity Chef du Jour where noted chefs such as Stephanie Izard and Graham Elliot prepared a three-course, sit-down meal and chatted with patrons for \$40 ticket to a specially designed, air-conditioned dining pavilion. Celebrity Chef du Jour and the ticketed seating area at the Petrillo Music Shell for headline concerts added an additional revenue stream to the festival, resulting in an additional \$280,000.

Blue Skies provided high flying action for this year's Chicago Air & Water Show which enjoyed two picture-perfect days on Chicago's lakefront. From the high-powered precision flying of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels to the jumps from 12,000 feet of the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Team and the U.S. Navy Leap Frogs to the Aerobatics from Aeroshell, the skies were full of loops, twists and jaw dropping stunts. Every available plot of sand along the lakefront was filled with families, drawing more than two million people to the largest free show of its kind in the United States.

Summer evenings on the Great Lawn in Millennium Park were filled with crowds enjoy a wide variety of sounds at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion which offered cutting edge rock with Downtown Sound, Electronica from the newest music series, Loops & Variations and Jazz with Made in Chicago: World Class Jazz.

This year's Chicago Jazz Festival over Labor Day weekend featured more than 40 free performances in four different venues with jazz performers ranging from high school age ensembles to the ever-young 87 year-old Roy Haynes. All three venues within the Chicago Cultural Center were packed with jazz fans and Roosevelt University's Ganz Hall was overflowing for Artist in Residence Ken Vandermark.

While the constant threat of rain slightly diminished Saturday crowds in Grant Park, Sunday was packed all day long with more than 20,000 people in place for the festival finale, pianist Allen Toussaint's Bright Mississippi.

The fall season of events from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events begins today with the 14th Annual World Music Festival with performances at multiple locations with two nights at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, September 22 and 26 and a full day at the Chicago Cultural Center on the final day, Thursday, September 27. The event is all free admission for the first time ever.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events is able to present free admission programming because of the generous support of its many corporate sponsors.

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