

**MAYOR CELEBRATES OPENING OF OUR NEW SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN SIX WEEKS THROUGH 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

*Joined by federal, state and local elected officials and Chicago's education leaders, Christopher House unveils new elementary school and service delivery model*



CHICAGO, IL —Christopher House celebrated the grand opening of its new facility in Belmont-Cragin at 5235 W. Belden Avenue. Mayor Emanuel and nearly 100 other guests toured the new building, visited classrooms and engaged with students throughout the school. The ribbon-cutting ceremony included Christopher House leadership, federal, state and local elected officials and a host of Chicago's education leaders, including David Vitale (President, Chicago Board of Education).

Christopher House's new Belmont Cragin Family Resource Center and School is the first school of its kind in Chicago, offering a continuum of education and social services to children from six weeks of age through eighth grade and their families. Beyond early childhood and primary education, support service offerings will include adult education, counseling, food pantry service and more. This innovative, school-based service model – incorporating both education and holistic support services – was intentionally designed to support the holistic well-being and stability of families served.

“Through Christopher House, the families of Belmont-Cragin will have Early Head Start in their neighborhood for the first time to help their children develop a solid educational foundation during these critical formative years,” Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. “Christopher House also understands that the most important door a child will ever walk through is the front door of their home, which is why their innovative early education and elementary school model provides wraparound services that support parents and children.”

The event marks the successful conclusion of the first phase in a two-phased growth campaign in Belmont Cragin. Beginning with the current 2013 – 2014 school year, Christopher House will serve 224 children in early childhood, kindergarten and first grade. The first phase was funded in large part through a \$5 million grant from the Illinois Capital Development Board. Additional support came from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and private philanthropy.

Christopher House will add one grade per year through eighth grade, while also phasing in components of the full suite of social support services. The second phase \$5 million fundraising campaign is underway to support annual grade-level expansion and the integration of the full array of support services. “We are extremely grateful to the generous support that has allowed us to bring this innovative model to Belmont Cragin and look forward to realizing the second phase of the building within the next year,” said Christopher House CEO Lori Baas. When complete and fully enrolled the new facility will enroll more than 500 children.