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**Erie House Awards Dinner Will Raise Funds for Important Violence Prevention Initiative**

*The annual event will honor three leaders in the community and highlight the agency's Expanded Learning Programs for Children and Youth.*

January 30, 2017 (CHICAGO)—Historic social service agency Erie Neighborhood House is preparing to host its Future of Promise awards dinner on Thursday, March 16, at Chicago's Radisson Blu Aqua.

This year's event is being chaired by Wintrust Financial Corporation. The fundraiser will benefit the agency's Expanded Learning Programs for Children and Youth (ELP), a critical violence prevention program providing holistic care and instruction to students ages 5 through 18.

"As a local company, we believe it's our responsibility to support organizations that make our area a better place," says Wintrust President & CEO Ed Wehmer. "We know that to create a bright future for our communities, we have to do everything we can to support our youth. That's why we're particularly proud to chair the Future of Promise awards dinner and invest in the children at Erie Neighborhood House; they're our next generation of leaders."

One of those future leaders, Brianna Vargas, is the daughter of immigrants from Mexico who grew up coming to Erie House along with her three siblings. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear the high school senior's inspiring story during the awards program and learn about the impact ELP is making in her life and the lives of her classmates.

In addition to highlighting these program achievements, the event will honor three community leaders: **John De Carrier**, Principal of MYD Holdings, will receive the Champion of Change Award; **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois** will receive the Corporate Leader Award, to be accepted by Clarita Santos, Senior Director, Community Health Initiatives; and **Rebecca Shi**, Executive Director at Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, will receive the Advocacy Award.

This year's program focus is especially timely given the current realities children and youth at Erie House are facing, says executive director Kirstin Chernawsky. "Our kids are so resilient. They're dealing with concerns about community violence, cuts to human services due to state budget woes, and national policies that are harmful toward immigrants," she observes. "They need the academic and socio-emotional support ELP provides now more than ever."

Chernawsky notes that the event is a significant boost to the operating budget for Erie House, which relies on funding partners and donor support to reach 5,500 individuals each year with programs that educate and empower. Between event sponsorships and donations night of during a live auction, last year's awards dinner grossed an unprecedented amount exceeding \$550,000.

The event will begin with a reception at 5:30 pm, followed by the evening program and dinner at 6:30 pm. For more information about attending Future of Promise or becoming an event sponsor, please call PJH & Associates at (312) 553-2000 or visit [www.eriehouse.org/futureofpromise](http://www.eriehouse.org/futureofpromise).