



A Magical Atmosphere Brings “Believers” to DIFFA/Chicago’s 21st Annual Gala and Sets the Stage for a Future without HIV/AIDS

(Chicago – June 14, 2009) More than 525 “Believers” gathered last evening at The Field Museum in Chicago during BELIEVE, DIFFA/Chicago’s magical-themed, hope-inspired Gala, to honor the many design industry professionals who have instilled a collective spirit of belief in finding a cure for HIV/AIDS.

Each year, DIFFA/Chicago raises much-needed funding to support HIV/AIDS service agencies that provide education and outreach to people who are HIV positive, living with AIDS or at risk for infection. This year, BELIEVE garnered nearly \$330,000 and celebrated the many contributors from the design industry in spectacular fashion, honoring those who have made a difference in the lives of literally thousands of people.

“More than ever the many men, women and children that we serve are in great need of our unrestricted funds. This evening we celebrate the strides our organization has made, raising over \$35 million in grants for local HIV/AIDS related organizations,” said Jennifer McGregor, chairman of the board, DIFFA/Chicago. “This achievement is due in part to the long-standing success of this event. We are all here because we believe that what we do makes a difference.”

Co-chaired by Lynn Fordon of Steelcase, Inc.; Rick Gilman of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP; and Hunter Kaiser of Herman Miller, BELIEVE was billed as “a magical moment in time” and captivated attendees from start to late finish via a

variety of sustainably-minded, fantastical presentations. Pavel Juricek of Kehoe Designs orchestrated the event décor - each table showcased a rich and whimsical setting adorned with oversized clocks and top-hat or picture-frame centerpieces accented by candlelight, red velvet and lavish brocade. An E-program replaced the printed version and the evening's menu not only outlined the event's delectable offerings but also was edible itself. The live auction sparked enthusiastic response from the attendees as auctioneer Greg Dellinger worked the room. Throughout the evening, magical elements mesmerized the gatherers and eloquently symbolized how the power of belief can inspire and transform.

Riveting examples of support were presented during the night by way of myriad statements from benefactors, sponsors and grantees alike, providing a true chorus for a cure. Comments included the following:

"DIFFA has remained one of our biggest blessings, consistently providing funds and visibility." *Rev. Stan J. Sloan, Chicago House*

"With a culture of fostering human-centered design at Herman Miller, we support DIFFA's mission to improve the lives of individuals living with HIV/AIDS." *Brian Walker, CEO, Herman Miller, and the gala's Legacy Benefactor*

"A grant from DIFFA/Chicago enables us to provide critical medical care to low income people living with HIV." *Donald Rolfe, Howard Brown Health Center*

"At Steelcase, we believe in DIFFA's vision for heightened awareness, education, research and care that will one day rid the world of AIDS." *Jim Hackett, President and CEO, Steelcase, and Presenting Sponsor*

"DIFFA's generosity helps us to deliver programs that help give our children the happy, loving childhood they deserve." *Jennifer Sampson, The Children's Place Association*

"*Contract Magazine* is proud to be a sponsor of DIFFA/Chicago and their continuing efforts to provide education and outreach to people who are HIV

positive, living with AIDS or at risk for infection. We champion their belief that one day we'll find a cure." *John Rouse, Publisher, Contract Magazine, the event's National Media Sponsor*

Among the evening's many highlights was the presentation of the Unsung Hero Award, an annual DIFFA/Chicago Gala tradition. This year, the honor went to Richard Cassis, a person who has worked above and beyond in supporting the DIFFA organization. Richard, principal of Sparc, Inc., created the concept of "Believe," inspiring a refreshed spirit and focus in reaching the organization's goals in its march towards a cure.

The evening culminated with a challenge to find a cure for HIV/AIDS by the year 2020 – setting the stage for a perfect vision of the future of DIFFA/Chicago.

Founded in 1984, DIFFA/Chicago is a not-for-profit fundraising and grant-making foundation that distributes funds to Chicago area HIV/AIDS service agencies that provide direct service, preventative education and outreach to people who are HIV positive, living with AIDS or at risk for infection.

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