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Fund raising at Festival Opening Gala as "Chicago Goes Turkish" at Pioneer Court

CHICAGO – After a decade long success at Daley Plaza, the Chicago Turkish Festival reaches a larger audience during its 11th anniversary at one of downtown Chicago's busiest landmark locations along the lively Magnificent Mile. For the first time in Chicago's history, the Pioneer Court, where the first Chicagoan settled, hosts a cultural exchange of this scope with the captivating sights, sounds and tastes of one of Chicago's most popular ethnic cultural festivals, the **Chicago Turkish Festival**, on May 31st and June 1st.

The Turkish Consulate General in Chicago and the Festival Organizing Committee host a black tie optional **Opening Gala Dinner at Pioneer Court** on the evening of **Thursday, May 30th** between 7:00-10:00 pm to commence the festivities and to benefit Mitochondrial Disease research. Guests will enjoy a preview of festival booths, an open buffet of Turkish cuisine, delicacies, wine and entertainment while having the opportunity to participate in a silent auction to support the United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation (UMDF). Among the items to bid on are vacation packages to Turkey and art pieces from Turkey and Turkish artists. Turkish Airlines supports the silent auction with two business class tickets to Turkey. All proceeds from the silent auction and a portion of Gala ticket sales will benefit the Foundation.

The festival opens to the public free of charge at 10 am on Friday, May 31th and runs through Saturday, June 1st from 10 am to 9pm each day, offering Chicagoans world famous Turkish cuisine and delicacies, live stage performances both at noon and in the evenings including whirling dervishes, a fashion show with Ottoman era flair, vibrant folk dances and musical performances featuring Simavi and the Chicago Jazz Quartet, arts and crafts exhibits, and the opportunity to enjoy the hospitality and breathtaking sights of one of the most historic regions of Turkey, **Cappadocia**.

You don't need a passport to attend this historic Pioneer Court event organized by the Turkish-American community in collaboration with the City of Chicago. "This is a unique opportunity for all Chicagoans to experience one of the richest and most colorful cultures and cuisines in the world while joining the efforts to raise funds and awareness for mitochondrial disease research. Mitochondrial disease affects thousands of children every year, damaging cells producing the energy the body needs to sustain growth and life, and causing death before they can reach teenage years. Two of our festival committee members suffered a great loss to this disease and our community is committed to support the research dedicated finding a cure," said Hon. Fatih Yildiz, the Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Chicago.

The Festival Committee invites all Chicagoans to attend the first ever Turkish Festival Gala and visit the UMDF stand with your generous donations to support this great cause. For further information please visit the event site at www.ChicagoTurkishFestival.org or contact info@chicagoturkishfestival.org.

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