



Chicago Fire Department Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VIRTUAL REALITY A REALITY FOR CHICAGO STUDENTS

Unprecedented Fire Safety Program Now Available for Chicago Elementary School Students

CHICAGO, IL – The Chicago Fire Department (CFD), together with the Chicago Fire Department Foundation (CFD Foundation) and Wintrust today unveiled the first-of-its-kind fire safety initiative entitled *The Fire Escape*, a 15-minute immersive experience that teaches the 10 Steps to Fire Safety to Chicago’s elementary school students. Fifth graders at St. Sabina Academy on Chicago’s South Side were among the first in the US to put on Oculus GO headsets and learn the 10 Steps through this virtual reality (VR) program. *The Fire Escape* helps to mark 30 years of fire safety education provided by the CFD to Chicago schools.

“Children too often don’t know what to do when a fire breaks out, and they react by hiding,” said CFD Commissioner Richard Ford II. “We’re proud that this new technology teaches children the essentials of fire safety and believe those who experience it will be inspired to share their learnings with their families at home.”

The Fire Escape encourages students to use what they learn to escape safely from a simulated kitchen fire located on the second floor of a Chicago two-flat. Locating the home’s smoke detector, escaping to a family meeting place, and other scenario-driven choices are recorded to assess student success at the conclusion of each training.

“Chicago has been at the forefront of fire safety and prevention initiatives for more than 100 years. This VR experience is another first for the City,” said Chris Hasbrook, UL LLC Vice President & General Manager – Building & Life Safety Technologies Division and CFD Foundation Co-Founder/Treasurer. “We hope that by putting *The Fire Escape* to the test, we’ll have the ability to drive recall of fire safety, and most importantly, save lives in our city.”

The CFD Foundation fully funded the design and implementation through contributions from Chicago corporations, including Aon, Mesirow Financial, Motorola Solutions, UL LLC, Wintrust Financial and Zurich.

Primary funding from Wintrust and pro bono services from Ogilvy helped to make this important and lifesaving teaching initiative a reality for a city known for its “firsts.”

“We’re proud to be involved with an effort like this that helps equip kids with the training they need to stay safe,” said Wintrust CEO & Founder Edward J. Wehmer. “At Wintrust, we love to partner with organizations, like the CFD Foundation, that are working on providing lasting contributions to help improve our area.”

“Working in partnership with the CFD and its Foundation has been an honor for the Ogilvy team,” said Joe Sciarrotta, Ogilvy’s deputy chief creative officer, worldwide. “*The Fire Escape* has given us the opportunity to advance fire safety education into the 21st Century and bring the newest technologies to Chicago’s kids.”

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