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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2017

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**MAYOR EMANUEL, FIRE DEPARTMENT CHIEF SANTIAGO CELEBRATE
48 NEW PARAMEDICS AND NEARLY 100 PROMOTIONS DURING GRADUATION CEREMONY**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) Commissioner Jose Santiago today recognized 48 new paramedics and nearly 100 fire department promotions during a graduation ceremony this evening in the Arie Crown Theater at McCormick Place.

"Firefighters and paramedics are heroes to our kids, our communities, and our city," said Mayor Emanuel. "Becoming a firefighter is more than a job and more than a career. It is a calling. Firefighters and paramedics are real-life superheroes, because they turn tragedies into triumphs, and embody the deepest values of our city."

This graduation ceremony recognizes new paramedics, who started training at the Fire Academy in March and will begin their district assignments this month. Paramedics are licensed by an accredited institution before joining the Fire Department. Academy training includes among other topics handling hazardous materials, Department policies and protocols, and coordinating medical services with hospitals, mental health clinicians and dispatchers.

"These men and women will continue the strong tradition of Chicago having the best equipped and trained members who are ready to serve every neighborhood to save life and property," said Fire Commissioner Santiago.

Today's graduating class of paramedics include 11 Chicago Public Schools graduates, six military veterans and nine participants of the Chicago Police and Firefighter Training Academy, a two-year collaborative program that recruits and trains Chicago high school students in first response.

In addition to the paramedic graduates, promotional certificates were presented for the appointments of ranks including District Chief, Deputy District Chief, Assistant Deputy Chief Paramedic, Commander, Battalion Chief, Captain, and Ambulance Commander. Following graduation, the new and promoted members will be assigned to various firehouses based on Department needs and lottery selection.

In the coming weeks, 17 new Advanced Life Support ambulances will be added to the Fire Department fleet. These ambulances are part of the city's ongoing replacement program that ensures that Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics have the most up to date and modern ambulances to keep Chicago residents safe across the city. The Department has a total of 158 Advanced Life Support vehicles as part of its fleet.

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