



PROJECT EXPLORATION
Changing the Face of Science.

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**Project Exploration Founder Gabrielle Lyon Named
2011 “Chicagoan of the Year”**
One of six “heroes” selected by Chicago magazine

Chicago, IL, Jan. 5, 2012—Project Exploration Founder and Senior Explorer Gabrielle Lyon has been selected as a 2011 “Chicagoan of the Year” by *Chicago* magazine in the January 2012 issue. She joins a group of six Chicagoans that the magazine celebrates as “intrepid heroes who make our city – and our world – a better place.” Lyon, an education activist, who is called a “science seer” in the *Chicago* profile, founded Project Exploration in 1999 to bring the wonders of science and discovery students of color and girls overlooked by traditional science education efforts. More than 85% of the students participating in Project Exploration’s out-of-school time programs come from low-income African-American and Latino families, and 74% are girls.

“The recognition by *Chicago* magazine validates the work of our entire team– our staff, students, scientists, volunteers and supporters,” said Lyon. “We opened our doors to put science – and scientists - to work in the service of students. Now that science has become a national priority it’s more critical than ever that we ensure all of Chicago’s young people have access to scientists and opportunities that fan the flames of curiosity and discovery. We help students discover themselves and the possibilities their lives hold.”

The January 2012 issue of *Chicago* is now on newsstands and online, with a video interview of Lyon, at www.chicagomag.com/coy2011. In the profile, Lyon speaks of creating new pathways for inner city students. “We help them discover so much about themselves, about the capacity they have,” Lyon is quoted. “We have to do more than “get kids interested in science.” We have to build systems for them to stay involved with science in school and beyond.”

The “Chicagoan of the Year” designation caps a year of milestones for Project Exploration. Last March, a 10-year retrospective study of its alumni found that the out-of-school



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time science education model produces significant and lasting effects on students' educational achievements and career aspirations in science. The organization has received important grants from the Abbott Fund, the Motorola Solutions Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, The Brinson Foundation, and the Chicago Foundation for Women. Project Exploration was named one of the best summer programs in the country by the National Summer Learning Association. In October, Project Exploration named Paige Ponder its new Chief Executive Officer, and Lyon transitioned to her new role as Senior Explorer.

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About Project Exploration: Project Exploration is a nonprofit science education organization that works to ensure communities traditionally overlooked by science – particularly minority youth and girls – have access to personalized experiences with science and scientists. Founded in 1999 by paleontologist Paul Sereno and educator Gabrielle Lyon, Project Exploration's youth programs impact the lives of hundreds of students each year by fostering and supporting a long-term involvement in science. The results of a 10-year retrospective study demonstrate that Project Exploration students are significantly more likely than their peers to graduate from high school, go to college, and major in science. 95% of students have graduated, or are on track to graduate; 50% of these students are enrolled in a four-year institution, or have already graduated; 60% are pursuing, or have already received, degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM); 32% surveyed hold science-related employment. Project Exploration provides a new model for engaging and retaining today's youth in science and technology. Learn more at www.projectexploration.org