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Ladder Up Founder Robert Burke Named to 2011 “Chicagoans of the Year”  
*One of six “heroes” selected by Chicago magazine*

**Media Contacts:** Anne Tucker, [atucker@mtconsultants.com](mailto:atucker@mtconsultants.com), 312-795-3556  
Richard Melcher, [rmelcher@mtconsultants.com](mailto:rmelcher@mtconsultants.com), 312-795-3550

Chicago, Jan. 4, 2012 —Ladder Up founder and president Robert Burke has been selected as a “Chicagoan of the Year” by *Chicago* magazine in the January 2012 issue, joining a group the magazine celebrates as six “intrepid heroes who make our city – and our world – a better place.” The profile of Burke, called “the tender taxman,” recalls his launch of Ladder Up in 1994. As a volunteer basketball coach on Chicago’s West Side, Burke discovered that many of his players went home to families struggling to make ends meet. Realizing that there were tax credits for working families, Burke saw an opportunity to do more to help families access needed funds. In late 1994, Burke recruited 90 coworkers to serve as volunteer tax preparers to help families file their taxes for free to secure valuable refunds. Now, Ladder Up ([www.goladderup.org](http://www.goladderup.org)) is a preeminent provider of financial assistance to help working families and individuals move up the economic ladder.

“I am gratified and humbled to have been named a ‘Chicagoan of the Year’,” said Burke, a former financial consultant now managing a private holding company. “This recognition really is for the entire organization. Ladder Up has grown to become a vital resource for tens of thousands of the working poor in the Chicago area. Whether helping families secure tax refunds or assisting students in securing financial aid for higher education, Ladder Up’s services have never been more important.” The January 2012 issue of *Chicago* is now on newsstands and online, with a video interview of Burke, at [www.chicagomag.com/coy2011](http://www.chicagomag.com/coy2011).

From his initial work helping West Side families obtain tax refunds, Burke has fostered Ladder Up’s growth and program expansion. The organization offered free financial services to more than 20,000 clients in 2011, helping hardworking families and individuals secure \$47 million in economic benefits. Through its Tax Assistance Program (TAP), Life-Improving Financial Tools (LIFT) program, and its network of 1,500 volunteers, Ladder Up has returned \$295 million in benefits to 148,000 clients since 1994.

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**About Ladder Up:** Through our programs - **TAP** (Tax Assistance Program) and **LIFT** (Life-Improving Financial Tools) – and our network of 1,500 volunteers, we provide free financial services to help hardworking families and individuals access the resources they need to move up the economic ladder. Whether it is helping clients obtain valuable tax refunds, secure the financial aid that makes higher education a reality or gain the knowledge to make sound financial decisions, Ladder Up is committed to helping its clients climb up and out of poverty.