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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO BASKETBALL GREAT ISIAH THOMAS ANNOUNCE
EXPANSION OF "WINDY CITY HOOPS" BASKETBALL PROGRAM FOR CHICAGO YOUTH**

All of Chicago Asked to Step Up and Support Program Through Individual Donation Campaign to Reduce Violence; Part of Mayor's Larger Plan to Give Alternatives and Mentoring to At-Risk Youth and Young Adults

Goal of Raising \$480K in 60 Days Will Provide 3,200 Additional Opportunities to Youth in 10 Parks Across The City

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today joined NBA Hall of Famer and Chicago basketball legend Isiah Thomas and the Chicago Park District to announce the expansion of the successful community basketball program, which provides a safe environment for at-risk youth throughout Chicago. The program builds on recent administration initiatives to expand proven programs that provide at-risk youth with jobs, training, and mentoring, including the City's recent expansion of the Becoming a Man and launch of the Greencorps youth program.

The Mayor enlisted support of all Chicagoans to fund the program's expansion. Anyone can visit cityofchicago.org/hoops and make a donation to support the purchase of a jersey, pay a referee for a game, reserve a court or support another part of the program. The \$480,000 goal will allow all Chicagoans to help create new teen basketball leagues at 10 parks that will open up an additional 3,200 registration slots for at-risk youth ages 13-17 year-round. The leagues will operate from 7-10pm on Fridays and 5-10pm on Saturdays, a substantial expansion that will double the total number of hours of teen basketball programming provided by the Park District year-round.

"Keeping our streets safe is about more than just police work – it requires that we provide our kids with productive opportunities to learn team work and leadership skills," said Mayor Emanuel. "This partnership will allow all Chicagoans to play a part in reducing the violence that is plaguing our communities by investing in programs that work. I will continue working with leaders from the

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private, public, and nonprofit sectors, as well as the general public, to identify innovative new approaches that reduce the risk of kids getting involved with drugs, gangs and violence. Chicagoans are interested in helping combat these problems, and we are pleased to offer them an outlet to do so.”

By utilizing an innovative financial model, the Chicago Park District Foundation will launch an individual donation campaign that will allow anyone to support Windy City Hoops.

“For me, as a child in Chicago, basketball was a way that I could enjoy myself, make friends, stay safe and obtain the education I needed to succeed in life” said Isiah Thomas. “I am happy to be involved with a program that will allow many others the same valuable opportunities that I had. I was taught to try and use the sports platform to go out and help others and better my community. I am doubly excited that this program will allow all Chicagoans to contribute to making these opportunities a reality for some of our most at risk-kids.”

The 10 parks are spread across eight community areas and were chosen according to high crime levels, low median income, and regional influence of the park facility:

- Pottowottomie (Rogers Park)
- Amundsen (Austin)
- Columbus (Austin)
- Garfield (East Garfield)
- Franklin (North Lawndale)
- Kennicott (Kenwood)
- Jackson (Woodlawn)
- Ogden (Englewood)
- Hamilton (Englewood)
- Fernwood (Roseland)

The year round league will start in March. The City’s program is an expansion of a youth and young adult basketball program aimed at enhancing neighborhood safety, engaging at-risk young adults, and reducing illegal gang activity in targeted neighborhoods. Last summer, 3,000 kids registered in Park District teen basketball leagues. Over the past year, the Park district has received close to 15,000 total registrations in its basketball programs - including open gym, leagues, instructional programs, and camps."

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