



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2021

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT, PARKS, LIBRARIES, AND AMAZON PARTNER TO HOST
SUMMER KICKBACK SERIES FOR TEENS**

This series is the latest offering of My CHI.My Future, the City's effort to connect Chicago's youth with safe and engaging spaces throughout 15 communities across the south and west sides.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot joins First Lady Amy Eshleman, the Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library, Amazon, and community-based organizations across the city to launch the inaugural Summer Kickback Series. This initiative provides safe spaces, programs, and other opportunities for Chicago youth, ages 14 to 19 in 15 communities on the south and west sides. The Summer Kickback Series is the latest offering of My CHI.My Future (MCMF), the City's effort to connect Chicago's youth with safe and engaging spaces throughout 15 communities across the south and west sides.

"Connecting our youth with safe, engaging, and empowering opportunities throughout the summer is critical to providing every possible pathway to success," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The Summer Kickback Series builds upon MCMF's efforts to further young Chicagoans' professional development leading to positive futures. I am also delighted to see that this initiative builds upon our efforts to continue encouraging vaccinations against COVID-19 and utilizes our all-hands-on-deck approach to public safety."

The Summer Kickback Series offers teens two ways to engage. Each of the 15 community-based organizations will hire 10-20 teens and two young adults to create a Kickback Street Team. During the nine weeks of employment, the team will promote youth-focused opportunities happening in the neighborhoods, conduct vaccine advocacy as well as plan and host Summer Kickback events in their respective communities. All youth will be trained as vaccine ambassadors through the online Vaccine Ambassador training provided by Malcolm X College and receive additional training through the Park District to encourage community members to remain COVID-safe and get vaccinated. Funding to hire up to 238 teens and young



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

adults will be provided by an anonymous donor and is being administered by the Chicago Parks Foundation.

“The Chicago Park District is excited to help deliver opportunities specifically programmed to engage and support young residents living in communities most in need,” said Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO Michael Kelly. The Summer Kickback Series is designed to do just that. These events will give teens an opportunity to connect in a safe, engaging setting to enjoy all the things teens love most – food, music, technology and of course being around their peers.”

“Every young person in Chicago deserves to explore their passions in youth-centered, out-of-school experiences,” said First Lady Eshleman. “We are committed to ensuring all youth are connected to meaningful opportunities this summer and beyond — leveraging community assets and the City’s resources to build positive futures for themselves and their communities.”

“In partnership with all of the community organizations, this sponsorship empowers teens to create activities in their own neighborhoods to reconnect,” said Sarah Glavin, Amazon’s Chicago Senior Manager of External Affairs. “Young people have faced daunting challenges throughout the pandemic and as our city reopens, it’s important they have engaging activities throughout the summer to socialize, see old friends, and make new ones in a safe and supportive environment. We’re thrilled to see this innovative programming get off the ground.”

“Lost Boyz Inc. is ecstatic about the opportunities created for youth in South Shore through the MCMF Summer Kickback Series.” Said Lost Boyz Executive Director, LaVonte Stewart. “Including young people’s energy in the workforce and helping to center their vision on the community is the right recipe for success and peace in our neighborhood.

“Breakthrough Ministries believes that the Summer Kickback Series and Kickback Street team employment aligns with our mission statement because it will allow us to build connections, develop skills, and open up doors of opportunities for our youth during this moment.” Said Breakthrough Senior Director, Violence Prevention, Damien Morris.

“CHI-RISE is thrilled to be the Summer Kick-back Series partner for the Auburn Gresham Community! We're excited to not only assist in facilitating fun, empowering, and engaging activities for the youth to participate in, however possessing the resources to PAY them takes this endeavor to the next level!” said CHI RISE Executive Director, Messiah Equiano. “This Summer Kick-back Series means a lot to the teens and young adults in the Auburn Gresham community



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

because it shows them, Chicago cares about them and they are worth the time and investment this initiative brings. Economically empowering them, builds confidence, self-esteem and enables them to get a better understanding of how life might be when they become full adults.”

“The West Garfield Park community is honored to be a part of the Summer Kickback Series initiative. We are more than what's shown on the nightly news about West Garfield Park.” Said Eric Davis, Executive Director of The BASE Chicago, “Our young people will change the narrative, the neighborhood and the city in a positive way.”

“New Eclipse Community Alliance of the New City/Back of the Yards community is extremely excited to partner with the Summer Kickback Series sponsored by MCMF, the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Parks Foundation.” Said New Eclipse Community Alliance (NECA) Director, Pam Butts. “This is an amazing opportunity for youth to plan and design programs by youth for the youth while showcasing and sharpening their event planning, creative, innovative, and team-building skills. This type of programming, with a genuine youth voice and a pay component, should be the model for future, consistent, sustainable programming for youth not only in the summer but year-round.”

“Being able to have a platform for youth and young adults to plan and execute their ideas for events and initiatives that they want to see in our communities is a blessing.” Said Fredricka Holloway, Associate Director at Gary Comer Youth Center. “The Summer Kickback Series allows them to contribute and give back in the ways they see fit to best impact the lives of other youth, parents, families, and more.”

“We are very excited at the opportunity to provide youth with a positive and fun outlet for the summer. Young people in our community deserve safe spaces where they can enjoy their peers and indulge in teen-inspired programming.” Said Executive Director of Project Exploration, Natasha Smith-Walker. “Teens are eager to have dedicated places, spaces, and opportunities to develop activities that interest them and help the community see the potential of its next generation of leaders.”

“Teamwork Englewood is excited to work with youth this summer through the Summer Kickback Series. As an organization that believes in youth empowerment, it is affirming to see this type of work being done throughout the city.” Said Avanii Hazzard, Mentoring Program Coordinator at Teamwork Englewood. “At Teamwork Englewood, we believe youth should be at the table to give a young person’s perspective and viewpoint. For youth residing in the Greater Englewood community, their participation presents as an opportunity to learn transferable



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



work skills while homing in and perfecting skills that they already have. We look forward to having fun at events planned and hosted by Greater Englewood's youth."

"Girls Inc. of Chicago is both excited and honored to be the Summer Kickback Series host for the Roseland community. It is a true privilege to connect with incredible young leaders from Roseland, like our Street Team Managers Nia and Miranda, and support their goals of creating meaningful change in the community. We are confident that the work of our youth team will present a positive summer narrative; a narrative that often gets lost in the headlines; one that shines the light on youth who are the epitome of the Girls Inc. mission; youth who have strength, intelligence and courage!"

"TA98 is thrilled to have the opportunity to curate Friday Summer Kickbacks in Little Village, in collaboration with MyCHI.My Future and the Chicago Parks Foundation." Said TA98 Team and Founder, David Rojas Jr. "We are looking forward to co-create programming with our team of young adult leaders from Chicago focusing on workforce development, entrepreneurship, health and fitness, and mentorship. Our young adults are so excited to be leading the kickbacks and are looking forward to reimagining what safety and success looks like for our communities in Chicago. "

"Community Assistance Programs is excited to be a part of the Summer Kickback Series team for the Englewood Community, in partnership with MCMF, the Chicago Park District, and the Chicago Parks Foundation," said LaTonya Anderson, Executive Director of Programs at Community Assisting Programs. "We know there is more to the Englewood community than what we see in the media and we look forward to the opportunity to assist the youth with improving their skills, share resources, plan fun, safe and engaging "kickbacks", provide networking opportunities and spread positive news around the Englewood Community. We want our summer kickback events to keep the youth and young adults safe, off the streets and for them to be encouraged. There's a lot of "GOOD" in Englewood and we are committed to making sure that the City of Chicago sees the positive side of the Englewood community! If we give back, good will come out."

"Phalanx Family Services is honored to be the Summer Kickback partner for the West Pullman community," said Pauline Sylvain, HUB Director for the Phalanx Family Services. "We are even more trilled to be providing mentorship, training, and employment opportunities to youth as they become leaders in their community. This summer, we look forward to learning about the activities and resources youth need to success and grow."



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Each community-based organization will host a weekly Friday night event “For Teens, By Teens” in their community from July 9 to August 27. One of these events will be enhanced with a DJ, catered food, lounge-seating, e-sports tournaments, and a traveling mural. Funding for these events is being provided by Amazon.

In addition to creating safe and engaging community events, the Summer Kickback Series will give the opportunity to share their opinions on what their neighborhoods need to help shape future city investments that impact youth.

Through the Summer Kickback Series and the generous support of philanthropy, we are investing over \$1.3 million in the 15 communities directly for youth this summer. Below is a list of partnering organizations and the communities they serve.

- Project Exploration – Austin
- CHI-RISE – Auburn Gresham
- New Eclipse Community Alliance – Back of the Yards
- Southwest Organizing Project – Chicago Lawn
- Community Assistance Programs – Englewood
- Breakthrough – East Garfield Park
- The BASE Chicago – West Garfield Park
- BUILD Inc. – Humboldt Park
- Gary Comer Youth Center – Greater Grand Crossing
- The Alliance 98 – Little Village
- Chicago Youth Centers – North Lawndale
- Girls Inc. of Chicago – Roseland
- Lost Boyz Inc. – South Shore
- Teamwork Englewood – West Englewood
- Phalanx Family Services – West Pullman

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