



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2013

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

WINDY CITY HOOPS BASKETBALL RECEIVES \$25,000 IN MATCHING FUNDS; YEAR ROUND BASKETBALL LEAGUE TO START TOMORROW

Special \$25,000 Match Received and \$57,740 in Small Donations Have Been Raised To Date; Donations Still Needed to Reach Goals

Today, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, NBA Hall of Famer and basketball legend Isiah Thomas, Chicago Park District Superintendent Michael Kelly, and the Chicago Parks Foundation announced that Windy City Hoops, a new crowd-funded basketball program targeted at providing at-risk youth a safe and productive option for their free time, has had a successful first five weeks of fundraising and has raised enough resources to start the program on Friday, March 22. Those interested in showing their support should visit cityofchicago.org/hoops.

"The Windy City Hoops year round basketball league will begin as spring starts thanks to the contributions of private donors and many Chicagoans," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "With these contributions we will expand the program aimed at enhancing neighborhood safety and engaging teenagers in targeted neighborhoods to provide safe and productive options for some of our most at-risk youth year round."

To date, the program has raised \$57,740 in online donations from 661 donors. The median donation amount is \$25. Additionally, two donors have donated a combined \$365,000 to the Parks Foundation.

"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 has allowed Chicagoans to contribute to making these opportunities a reality for some of our most at risk-kids."

Gary and Denise Gardner of the Gardner Family Foundation have donated \$125,000 to the fundraising drive. The Sammons Financial Group (SFG), which donated \$215,000 to the effort on its first day, has given an additional \$25,000 to match the \$21,517 the public committed in online donations between March 13 and March 20.

“Since the very first day, we have been happy to join Mayor Emanuel and all the Chicagoans to fund the program’s expansion,” said Steve Palmitier, President and Chief Operating Officer of SFG. “We are proud to match the additional contributions received to ensure the safety of our youth.”

Mayor Emanuel and the Chicago Parks Foundation 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 overall program 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 13-18 year-round. The leagues will operate from 7-10 pm on Fridays and 5-10 pm on Saturdays, a substantial expansion that will double the total number of hours of teen basketball programming provided by the Park District year-round.

The 10 parks are spread across eight community areas:

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

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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