



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2025

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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON AND CITY OF CHICAGO HONOR YOUTH'S ROLE IN CREATING SAFE SPACES WITH MY CHI. MY FUTURE. END OF SUMMER CELEBRATION

Youth employed through the Safe Spaces program will present on their experience this summer and participate in an awards ceremony honoring their work hosting safe and fun events in their neighborhoods.

CHICAGO — Recognizing the vital role Chicago's youth play in the creation of safe spaces, Mayor Brandon Johnson and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services are proud to host an End of Summer Celebration for youth participating in the City's My CHI. My Future. (MCMF) Safe Spaces for Youth program Wednesday, Aug. 13 at the Chicago Cultural Center. The event will take place from 3 to 6 p.m. in Preston Bradley Hall and is expected to draw 250 to 300 guests, including young people ages 16 to 24 and staff from Safe Spaces organizations and partners. Youth who have been employed through the Safe Spaces program this year will share poster presentations and participate in an awards ceremony honoring the work they have done to plan and host safe and fun events for teens in their home communities all year long.

"I am thrilled to celebrate our young people and the progress they have made to build safer, thriving communities this summer," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "We are experiencing historic decreases in crime and violence throughout Chicago, and it is because we are empowering residents, and especially our young people, to be part of the solution. My administration will continue to invest in, empower, and hire young people as a core tenet of our work to build the safest, most affordable big city in America."

Mayor Johnson will view student poster presentations before providing opening remarks to kick off the event's awards ceremony at the End of Summer Celebration. Additional event speakers will include newly-appointed Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Angela Green and youth participants in the Safe Spaces program. Home Run Inn is partnering to provide donated pizzas for the event.



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"The End of Summer Celebration puts on public display the results of our youth's summer of hard work creating safe spaces for young people in their own neighborhoods," said **Commissioner Green**. "The Safe Spaces program provides unique infrastructure that enables Chicago's youth to take on leadership roles in addressing public safety. Participating youth gain an incredible growth experience, and their service is an invaluable opportunity for City leaders to learn from the expertise and lived experiences of our young people."

The Safe Spaces for Youth program employs 224 young people in year-round positions, with many youth participating in the program over multiple sessions or years. In total, the program's employees will oversee the creation and execution of more than 120 youth events throughout 2025.

"Being part of this work shows me that my voice matters," said **Nyilah Walton, a Safe Spaces Youth Employee** with Think Outside Da Block in Chicago Lawn. "When we show up for our community, we're building something bigger than us and we're creating space, opportunities, and hope for people who look like us."

Examples of the types of events offered include youth open-mics, a neighborhood peace march, move nights, a fashion show featuring youth designers, a wellness fair, basketball tournaments, a glow-in-the-dark dance party, and more.

"These events let us know there are people that think of us as teens who want to enjoy themselves, rather than teens that are lost to the streets," said **Robert Rodgers, a Safe Spaces Youth Employee** working with the YMCA in Humboldt Park.

The MCMF initiative was launched by the Mayor's Office in 2019 with the goal of connecting young people to a variety of rich, engaging, safe and youth-centered out-of-school time opportunities across the city. Since then, MCMF has launched several citywide and community-based strategies. The Safe Spaces for Youth program, managed by DFSS since 2022, serves 14 Community Strategy Regions across the city's South and West Sides.

Current Safe Spaces for Youth partner agencies include:

- After School Matters (Increase the Peace, Back of the Yards; Marillac St. Vincent Family Services, Garfield Park)
- Metropolitan Family Services (Auburn Gresham, Greater Roseland Area)
- Northwest Center (Belmont Cragin)
- Project Exploration (Austin)
- SGA Youth & Family Services (Brighton Park, Gage Park)



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- The Alliance 98 (Little Village)
- Think Outside Da Block (Chicago Lawn, Greater Englewood Area)
- Urban Male Network (Greater Grand Crossing, South Shore)
- Young Men's Christian Association (Humboldt Park)

"I find this work important because it allows us to give back to the community," said **Anayanci Calderon, a Safe Spaces Youth Employee** with After School Matters at Marillac St. Vincent Family Services in Garfield Park. "I originally joined because of the event planning—I stayed because of the community. The kids and teens like the events because they are something they can enjoy with their friends for free and be safe. There's not a lot of free opportunities for young people in Chicago. Therefore, I find this work an essential part of the community."

The Safe Spaces for Youth program is supported through American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding meant to address the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on young people and communities across the City's most impacted regions.

For more information about the End of Summer Celebration or the My CHI. My Future. Safe Spaces for Youth program, please contact DFSS Director of Public Affairs Linsey Maughan at linsey.maughan@cityofchicago.org.

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