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**ICYMI: MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON LAUNCHES SUMMER SPORTS SERIES TO PROVIDE
SAFE SPACES DURING HOLIDAY WEEKENDS**

The "Late Night Ball" series leverages public-private partnerships during high-risk evening hours on Memorial Day, Father's Day, July 4 and Labor Day weekends

CHICAGO – The Mayor's Office of Community Safety launched a summer sports series in partnership with city departments, sister agencies, community-based organizations, and private corporations to create safe and welcoming public spaces for Chicago residents during holiday weekends when violence historically spikes.

The "Late Night Ball" summer series kicked off Memorial Day weekend and will continue on Father's Day, Independence Day and Labor Day weekends. Programs run from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at select locations citywide, serving residents over 18 in communities most impacted by violence.

"This is an amazing collaboration of both public and private sectors to support safe spaces for youth and adults in our city," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "We have seen the proof of our investments result in decreases in violence across sectors, and through this series, we are showing our continued dedication to that work by fulfilling a need in our neighborhoods for safe, fun engagement."

As part of the [People's Plan for Community Safety](#), "Late Night Ball" provides safe, free space for youth and adults of highest promise, emphasizing the strength of public-private partnerships between the Mayor's Office of Community Safety, Chicago Park District, City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago Department of Public Health, [Project sWISH](#), [Operation Basketball](#) and Lyft.



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“Late Night Ball is about more than sports—it’s about community healing, connection, and reclaiming public space,” said **Garien Gatewood, Deputy Mayor of Community Safety**. “We’re proud to work with our city and community partners to make this a safe, engaging environment where trust and relationships can grow.”

“Our mission is to support, educate, and empower young people through a collective community effort,” said **Michael Holder, Managing Director of Operation Basketball**. “This league reflects that mission by using basketball as a vehicle to show teens that they have the power to impact their communities, build successful careers, and lead healthy, meaningful lives.”

“This isn’t just basketball, it is a movement for peace, healing, intervention, and community. I’ve lost more than a dozen friends to senseless gun violence,” said **McKinley Nelson, Project sWISH Chicago**. “That pain fuels my purpose-to give others a chance to heal, connect and stay safe. Late night basketball has been a priority of PSC for over 3 years, and we are proud to see this vision come to life.”

Memorial Day Weekend Launch

For Memorial Day weekend, residents played basketball at two locations: Malcolm X College, 1900 W. Jackson Blvd. and Washington Park Fieldhouse at 5531 S. King Drive. Residents were required to register to attend as space is limited.

Lyft provided codes for free rides to and from each location to support the activation of these safe spaces and ensure accessibility for those who have limited transportation options.

“Lyft is proud to support the ‘Late Night Ball’ initiative by providing free rides that help young people and families access safe, enriching spaces in their neighborhoods,” said **Arielle Rodriguez Maffei, Lyft Public Policy Manager**. “Mobility is about more than just getting from point A to point B — it’s about empowering communities and ensuring every young person has the freedom to show up, participate, and thrive. By partnering with the City of Chicago, we’re helping ensure that more people can move freely and safely across the city.”



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City Colleges of Chicago and the Chicago Park District are instrumental in this partnership, supplying venues, uniforms, and equipment for these events.

“City Colleges looks forward to opening our doors to young people across Chicago as part of the Late Night Basketball series. These events offer a safe, positive space to connect, compete, and build a stronger community—and we’re proud to be part of it,” said **Chancellor Juan Salgado, City Colleges of Chicago.**

“We are proud to join the city of Chicago and City Colleges to host Late Night Basketball at Washington Park and Malcolm X College starting this Memorial Day weekend and other holiday weekends throughout the summer,” said **Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO Carlos Ramirez-Rosa.** “As we embark upon the summer, it is critical that we provide programming that keeps our city’s young adults engaged in positive activities. This initiative, along with existing programs like our Windy City Hoops and Summer Teen League, increases access to athletic courts and fields where young people can continue to channel their competitive energy and social spirits in a safe environment.”

Windy City Hoops

The Late Night Ball series complements the Park District’s existing Windy City Hoops, which serves youth ages 13-21 with safe alternative spaces as a deterrent to violence, one hoop at a time. Set up as a miniature tournament, games are played twice a week across 12 Park District sites, culminating in playoffs and a championship.

Windy City Hoops summer session begins July 1, 2025. To learn more about the program and to sign up, visit the Park District website [here](#).

This initiative reflects the City’s commitment to creating safe alternatives during peak times for violence, while fostering collaboration between residents, community leaders, and public safety partners.

The full schedule with future site locations and additional details will be released in the coming weeks.

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About Mayor's Office of Community Safety

The Mayor's Office of Community Safety (MOCS) is committed to investing intentionally in people and communities through the full force of government and a community-driven approach that aims to: systemically promote community safety by addressing root causes, rapidly response to specific community safety challenges through trauma-informed and community-based interventions. For more information on MOCS, visit our website at <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/community-safety/home.html>

Project sWISH

At Project sWish Chicago, our mission is to unite communities by providing a safe, supportive environment that fosters mental wellness and promotes healing. Through our free, inclusive *Hoop & Healing* late-night basketball open runs, we offer a vital outlet in multiple neighborhoods during times statistically linked to high levels of gun violence. For more information, please contact McKinley Nelson, at McKinley@projectswishchicago.com or 312-874-0434.

Operation Basketball

Our mission is to support, educate and empower young people through a collective community effort. We believe that by using sport as the catalyst to help develop young adults, we can show teens that they can impact their communities, have successful careers, and live healthy and meaningful lives. For more information, please contact Michael Holder, Director of Programming at mike@operationbasketball.org or 618-967-1591.