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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT, CHICAGO WHITE SOX, CHICAGO CUBS KICK OFF CITYWIDE YOUTH BASEBALL, SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT TODAY**

*First citywide tournament in decades will feature youth teams from throughout Chicago*

As part of an effort to provide Chicago children with more opportunities to participate in organized baseball and softball, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Cubs today announced that the first annual citywide youth baseball and softball tournament in decades will be held this weekend at UIC. This tournament is made possible through donations made by the Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Cubs.

"Tens of thousands of Chicago kids play baseball and softball in Chicago's parks, but there hasn't been a citywide baseball or softball tournament in decades," said Mayor Emanuel. "I'm pleased that Chicago's major league baseball teams have come together to create an opportunity for kids from neighborhoods across the city compete with their peers; this tournament complements the capital investments we've been making in parks to enrich the quality of life of all Chicagoans."

This year's tournament will host 30 youth baseball teams and six youth softball teams and will be held at UIC Curtis Granderson Stadium and Outdoor Recreation Turf Field Complex. Games will be held on August 21, 22 and 23. First round match-ups will provide opportunities for leagues from throughout the city to compete, with a post-game meal provided to strengthen relationships between kids and communities. Saturday night's games will conclude with a viewing of *The Sandlot*, a classic youth baseball movie, in Curtis Granderson Stadium at dusk. The championship game for both the softball and baseball tournaments will be held at 4 pm Sunday at UIC. Admission to all games is free.

As announced last year by the Mayor and the Chicago Park District, the Chicago White Sox and Chicago Cubs provided \$250,000 each – a total of a half of a million dollars – to allow for an expansion of baseball and softball programming. This five year commitment by the White Sox and Cubs, in partnership with the Chicago Parks Foundation, has allowed for the establishment of this annual-city-wide baseball and softball tournament.

“The Chicago White Sox and Chicago Cubs have stepped up for youth in Chicago by making this tournament possible,” said Michael P. Kelly, Chicago Park District Superintendent and CEO. “These programming investments and capital improvements are opening doors for youth baseball and softball participation across the city.”

Currently, more than 50,000 youth in Chicago participate in baseball and softball annually at more than 80 Chicago Park District parks. In addition to the citywide baseball and softball tournament, the \$500,000 investment by the Cubs and White Sox will allow the Park District to support community based youth baseball and softball in Chicago parks through clinics, camps and trainings for coaches.

"Baseball has long lived in the hearts of Chicagoans, adding to the character and identity of this great sports city, and the White Sox are committed to carrying forward that spirit and love of the game to the next generation of baseball players and fans," said White Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf. "The White Sox are honored to team up with the City of Chicago and the Chicago Cubs and create more opportunities for kids to experience the thrill of the game by picking up a bat and ball while also developing important skills to succeed both on and off the field." Through its youth baseball initiatives including Amateur City Elite (ACE), Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and Inner City Youth Baseball League (ICYB), nearly 13,000 youth around the city have participated in Chicago White Sox Charities baseball programs since 1993, with nearly 100 players earning scholarships to colleges and universities.

The Cubs' participation continues the team's tradition as one of the largest private donors to the Chicago Park District, supporting park renovations and efforts like Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and the thousands of Chicago children who play baseball and softball in Chicago's parks. "The Chicago Cubs are proud to join Mayor Emanuel, the Chicago Park District and the White Sox in this exciting, citywide youth baseball and softball tournament," said Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts. "We look forward to seeing talent from all Chicago neighborhoods and communities come together in a great tournament this weekend."

Mayor Emanuel previously announced \$17 million in capital improvements to support youth baseball and softball, featuring artificial turf fields at Southwest Elementary School, Clark Park, Amundsen Park, Kelly Park, Columbus Park, Palmer Park, Tuley Park and Jackie Robinson Park.

For more information, visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) or call 312.742.PLAY, 312.747.2001 (TTY).

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The Chicago Park District is the 2014 Gold Medal Award winner, recognized for excellence in park and recreation management across the nation. For more information about the Chicago Park District's more than 8,300 acres of parkland, 585 parks, 26 miles of lakefront, 12 museums, two world-class conservatories, 16 historic lagoons, nearly 50 nature areas, thousands of special events, sports and entertaining programs, please visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) or contact the Chicago Park District at 312/742.PLAY or 312/747.2001 (TTY). Want to share your talent? Volunteer in the parks by calling, 312/742.PLAY.