

Chicago Police Officers Coach Youth Baseball Leagues to Build Trust between Community Members and Police

Get IN Chicago continues to fund the community-based program based on data showing substantial benefits for youth participants

Chicago, IL ([PRWEB](#)) July 12, 2017 -- [Get IN Chicago's](#) 2017 Police/Youth Baseball Leagues are kicking off for the summer. The program will serve 300 kids ages 9-12 in Austin, Englewood, and North Lawndale. The leagues, which are offered at no cost, run in collaboration with Westside Health Authority, Teamwork Englewood, BBF Family Services, the Chicago Police Department, and the Chicago Park District. While the leagues provide a fun and typical summer activity for kids in these three communities, the program was created with a much bigger picture in mind – to build trust between youth and police officers.

Every team in the league is coached by an officer – either active or retired – from the Chicago Police Department. Mentors and other volunteers from the local community also contribute to the program. In addition to baseball fundamentals, the leagues include sessions on leadership, conflict resolution, behavior regulation, sportsmanship, and restorative justice.

“After the first year, we doubled in size, and this year the leagues will expand again to serve 100 more kids,” said Dr. Toni Irving, Executive Director at [Get IN Chicago](#), a collaborative effort led by business leaders to identify the most promising practices to reduce youth violence. “Young people are gaining much more than baseball skills; police are seeing firsthand the potential these kids have; and parents, grandparents, siblings, and other community members are rallying around their teams and supporting both the kids and the police. The positive ripple effects will be long-lasting.”

Evaluation findings released in 2016 indicate that youth participating in the program increased their positive perception of law enforcement and expressed an increased belief in their ability to make a difference in their community. This year, Get IN Chicago will survey the three leagues to measure improvements in perceptions of police among all 300 youth participants and changes in officer-coaches’ ability to work in partnership with youth.

“It’s a great thing to get these boys and girls outside, safely, and have them interact and connect with police on a number of levels – as a coach during the season, and as a mentor and a friend off the field as well,” said Retired Officer Marco Johnson, who has been involved in the league since it started.

[Get IN Chicago](#) is supporting the North Lawndale, Englewood, and Austin leagues with more than \$300,000 in grants. A number of local businesses and partners are also donating resources, time, and support to the leagues, and in conjunction with the Chicago Park District, practices and games will be held at Hamilton Park, Franklin Park, and Columbus Park.

About Get IN Chicago

Get IN Chicago provides counsel to funder and community-based organizations working to reduce youth violence and address the underlying, systemic issues that lead to youth violence. Get IN Chicago also studies and funds antiviolence initiatives focused on acutely high-risk youth, those who are at heightened risk for becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. To learn more, please visit Get IN Chicago online at getinchicago.org.



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