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MAYOR EMANUEL LAUNCHES DESTINATION: CHICAGO MOBILE VAN TO BRING COMPUTERS AND COMPUTER LEARNING TO UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOODS THIS SUMMER

Project powered by Chicago City of Learning and sponsored by Best Buy

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Park District Superintendent Michael P. Kelly were joined today by 75 Park District summer campers at Columbus Park to launch a program to fill opportunity gaps in underserved neighborhoods. As part of Chicago City of Learning (CCOL), Destination: Chicago Mobile Van will bring computers and computer learning to neighborhoods throughout the city this summer.

"Every child in Chicago should have access to year-round learning opportunities, no matter where they live," said Mayor Emanuel. "CCOL is designed to connect students with meaningful opportunities for learning, and this summer, the mobile van will ensure the delivery of math and science programming to every community so that students can stay safe, engaged and prepared for success when school resumes this fall."

Launched by Mayor Emanuel in 2013, CCOL is a groundbreaking initiative that offers learning opportunities for young people in a way that allows them to think about, pursue and develop their interests. The Destination: Chicago Mobile Van is a mobile classroom designed to engage students in online programs, also helping them to identify the on-site programs that excite their curiosity and are available at locations in their neighborhood or throughout the city.

Developed through partnerships with DePaul's Digital Youth Network and Best Buy, the van is equipped with 20-30 computers, trained mentors and other technology, and will allow young people to work on fun and educational coding; programming; fashion and graphic design; and music and video production.

"Our goal since the inception of CCOL in the summer of 2013 has been to provide all Chicago youth with the learning opportunities they need to develop new interests, pursue their passions, and lead them on a pathway to career success," said Dr. Nichole Pinkard of Digital Youth Network at DePaul University, which leads CCOL. "The Destination: Chicago mobile van is allowing us to reach the previously unreachable."

Over the weekends to come, Destination: Chicago Mobile Van will be at neighborhood festivals and special events, offering activities that can quickly engage youth and parents through short challenges on CCOL's online suite of playlists, including learning activities connected to fashion,

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music, design, art and media.

On weekdays, the van will visit summer schools and Chicago Park District camps that do not have the equipment and expertise to provide meaningful online learning experiences. The van has a fixed schedule of being at Bryn Mawr Church on Tuesdays, Garfield Park on Wednesdays and Ping Tom Park on Thursdays. However, CCOL recently announced a program called “mobile Mondays,” in which the van will travel to parks, schools and neighborhoods upon the request of aldermen or community groups.

“The Destination: Chicago Mobile Van is another step in bridging the gap in resources when it comes to the education of our children,” said Superintendent Kelly. “We keep kids active at summer camp, but we will also keep them learning.”

Through Destination: Chicago Mobile Van, youth aged 6-16 will work with two trained mentors for three hours, one day per week for six weeks. Experiences on the van will include the Computational Making pathway, a series of learning and making activities that introduce youth to coding, programming, design, and making; the Young Author Playlist, a multi-leveled set of experiences designed to help youth explore five different genres of writing; and the Best Buy Challenge series, which includes technology-focused activities related to music production, graphic design and video.

Youth will be able to collaborate, share and iterate with support of their peers and mentors and earn digital badges that can showcase participation and accomplishments, just as other CCOL users do while participating in on-site CCOL programs located in better-resourced neighborhoods.

Best Buy, a sponsor of the program, is dedicated to helping teens develop the technology skills that will inspire future education and career choices. As just two examples of that commitment, Best Buy operates eight Teen Tech Centers around the country, including one at Little Black Pearl on Chicago’s south side, and hosts Geek Squad Academy workshops countrywide.

“We are committed to giving youth opportunities to learn about technology and all of the future education and career possibilities that come with it,” said Susan Bass Roberts, senior director of Community Relations and Diversity & Inclusion at Best Buy. “We support the Destination Chicago van because it will help us bring tech education to underserved youth who normally wouldn’t have access to these types of opportunities.”

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ABOUT CHICAGO CITY OF LEARNING: CCOL is a citywide, year-round program that turns Chicago into a city-wide campus by bringing together the city’s endless opportunities to learn new skills, discover passions and build pathways to further education and careers. Digital badges offered through CCOL recognize learning across programs in the initiative – whether at a park, museum, library or online course – giving learners a digital portfolio that communicates the skills they have developed. CCOL is led by the City of Chicago and Digital Youth Network at DePaul University, and it is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Best Buy and Comcast. More information on the Chicago City of Learning can be found at www.ChicagoCityofLearning.org.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT: 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 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.