



City of  
**OAKLAND**  
California

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## News from: Department of Human Services

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2, 2013

#### FRIDAY SUMMER NIGHTS AT THE PARK

**Oakland, CA** – Messengers4Change, a project of Oakland Unite within the Department of Human Services, is hosting Friday Summer Nights at the Park again this year. The parks program began Friday, July 12 and will run through August 16. All Friday Summer Nights at the Park events are free and open to the public, and they are held from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Carter Gilmore Park (located at 1390 66th Avenue) and Willie Wilkins Park (located at 1100 98th Avenue). The events include free food and refreshments, games and entertainment for all ages, and raffles. The parks program is intended to change community norms around violence through community engagement and empowerment.

For the past two summers, Messengers4Change has hosted the six-week park program in targeted hotspots in East Oakland as part of Mayor Quan's Late Night Live in the Parks project. In 2011, Messengers4Change piloted Friday nights in the park program at Willie Wilkins Park on 98th Avenue in East Oakland. The success of that program led to the adoption of a second park in the summer of 2012 – Carter-Gilmore Park on 66th Ave. This year, Messengers4Change plans to build on the program's success and continue to support residents taking a stand against violence. Many Messengers4Change volunteers are Oakland residents, parents, youth and victims of violence from the neighborhood concerned about violence. These individuals come to the park and bring their friends and families because they want to support young people in their community and promote peace.

The initial Messengers4Change parks program results related to neighborhood violence have been positive: the average number of police incidents (including all part 1 crimes) in the Willie Wilkins Park area decreased by 43% during the two six week periods that the event was held compared to the average for the previous two years. This reduction in crime held steady even though crime in Oakland overall was up 20% in 2012.

The Messengers4Change Friday Summer Nights at the Park program is based on the Los Angeles' Summer Night Lights program. Like that intervention, the Messengers4Change parks program is connected to the broader Oakland Unite strategy focused on gang reduction and shooting and homicide intervention and response. The parks programs in L.A. and Oakland are intended to disrupt violence by offering programming and extended park hours in neighborhoods with high rates of violence, during peak hours when violence occurs. In addition to programming (athletics, music, etc.), intervention specialists (Oakland Unite Street Outreach Workers based at California Youth Outreach) attend the event to engage with young people and offer conflict mediation and peace-making support. Both

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The L.A. and Oakland parks programs also involve law enforcement and a broad cross-section of community members, in order to build trust and strengthen relationships. The parks program also involves a broad section of community-based organizations and resource providers.

The Oakland Friday Night Parks Program is supported by Oakland Unite, a Federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, a grant from the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, as well as funds through the Mayor's Office. Join us and be part of the fun this summer. **Become a Messenger4Change and make a difference in your community.** To learn more visit: [www.messengers4change.org](http://www.messengers4change.org)

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