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Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City to Host Inaugural June Madness Basketball Tournament in Honor of Chris Ford

The Tournament, a fundraiser for the Club, is being held the weekend of June 10-11 in the Evolution Arena. The Ford Family will accept the recognition for Ford's Legacy at a Kickoff Cocktail Party on June 9th.



The Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City (BGCAC) is hosting an inaugural Basketball Tournament, *June Madness*, which will honor the legacy of local NBA player and coach, Chris Ford. Held in the Club's newly renovated Evolution Arena within its MGM Teen Center, the event is being held the weekend of June 10th-11th with a kickoff Cocktail Party on Friday June 9th. The basketball tournament will consist of an 8-team elimination style bracket comprised of area sponsors, businesses and organizations. Teams will compete to win the Club Cup which will be engraved annually to commemorate that year's winner. BGCAC CEO Charles Wallace tells us that "It is the Club's intent to hold this tournament for years to come, growing it into a mainstay of friendly competition in the spirit of Mr. Ford's celebrated contributions to basketball."

An Atlantic City native and graduate of Holy Spirit High School, Chris Ford spanned an impressive career as a Shooting Guard in the NBA as both a player and coach. His collegiate career at Villanova University made its mark as he helped to lead the team to three consecutive NCAA Tournaments. From there, Ford was drafted to the Detroit Pistons in 1972 and eventually went on to finish his time as an NBA player with the Boston Celtics in 1978. Mr. Ford was part of the Celtic's NBA Championship team in 1981 but is perhaps best known for making the first official three-point shot in professional basketball history. He spent his final years in the NBA as a Coach, ending with a tenure at the Philadelphia 76ers. Chris Ford has a long history of volunteerism with BGCAC's youth basketball programs. Throughout the 80s and 90s, he gave time to coach and mentor Club members who were playing recreational ball in its gym. In 2021, Ford served on the GO HOOPS Committee to renovate the gym into a state-of-art arena. Mr. Ford passed away in early 2023; the Club and community recognize his legacy with the NBA as well as his influence and involvement in Atlantic City and its surrounding communities. "We are proud to hold this inaugural tournament in memory of Chris Ford," said Cookie Till, Event Chairperson and BGCAC Board Member. "His legacy has touched so many peers, colleagues, fans and youth in the Atlantic City area and we are grateful that his family has accepted the honor on his behalf."

The Ford family will accept the honor at the June 9th cocktail event which will officially kick off the weekend tournament. Held in the Club's Teen Center, the party will feature signature cocktails, artisanal food tastings and a festive atmosphere inside of the colorful building where Atlantic City youth come each day to learn and grow. Tickets to the cocktail party are \$100 each and can be purchased online at acbgc.org/junemadness. Sponsorships for the event are still available and can also be found on the website. Weekend basketball games are open to the public with an admission charge of \$10 per person, under 12 years of age is free.

In 2021, The Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City's (BGCAC) launched a Capital Campaign to transform their gym, originally a boxing ring for boys in the 1970s and then a basketball court in the 1980s, into a state-of-the-art arena. The space, now known as Evolution Arena, was officially opened on September 13th, 2022 and currently hosts basketball, youth sports, speaking engagements, cultural exhibits, and

community events. The BGCAC provides resources for the development of youth and their families, from all backgrounds, to realize their full potential. BGCAC serves as the beacon of hope for Atlantic City residents and serves as the scaffolding for families to climb, ensuring and empowering our Club Kids to engage the world with a greater purpose through exploration and opportunity. For more information, please visit www.acbgc.org or email info@acbgc.org.
