

Celebs lend star power to anti-violence movement

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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FULL TEXT

Hollywood stars from all over the country are hitting the streets of Philadelphia this weekend for the fourth annual Charlie Mack Party 4 Peace Celebrity Weekend.

Attacking ongoing violence throughout the city, actor/comedian Chris Tucker and comedian/actress Mo'Nique will head up many of the events from Saturday to Sunday. Other celebrities will include Queen Latifah, Terrence Howard, Tichina Arnold, Tisha Campbell-Martin, Chico Benymon, Chris & Neef and Floetry.

Campbell-Martin said this is her third year participating in this event. Not only is it a chance for her to see some of her celebrity friends that she hasn't seen in awhile, but most importantly, she said, it's an opportunity for her to touch people. Whether someone is from the community or not, Campbell-Martin encourages everyone to come out and participate.

"When we come there, it's for the purpose of giving hope," she said. "Making a difference in anything is a must. We have to put our hands back into the pot."

Remembering back to when she was 5 years old, Campbell-Martin said a celebrity, whom she did not want to mention, came to visit her neighborhood. She said the celebrity patted her on the head and seemed to really care. That one moment, she said, encouraged her toward a better life.

Campbell-Martin said that the general public sometimes thinks that celebrities were simply born celebrities. But, when she talks about her life growing up in the projects and how she was raped as a young girl, she is able to form more of a connection with the public.

Film producer and promoter Mack actually began this event in 1990 as a celebrity basketball game. Since then, it has evolved into a charitable event that benefits for Mothers in Charge, a Philadelphia-based victims' advocate group as well as Yesha Ministries and other Philadelphia area non-profit anti-violence groups.

"As a native Philadelphian, I wanted to provide young people with a vehicle to interact with today's entertainment industry actor/actresses and professional sports players, however, it was after the loss of my two brothers that I saw an even greater need to create a fundraising benefit to assist anti-violence organizations," Mack said,

Benymon said this will be his fourth year participating in this event, and he wouldn't miss it for the world. Not only is Charlie Mack the one who helped him with his career, but he also gets a lot out of forming relationships with the kids. He said that he gives the juveniles his post office box number and keeps in touch with them through mail.

"I'm all about giving back and trying to help out with the kids," Benymon said. "A lot of people just want to be talked

to. It's really big to the juveniles."

When he was young, Benymon said, he didn't have many people to talk to, and he especially didn't have the opportunity to talk to any celebrities. He said the weekend gives the celebrities a chance to share their personal stories to the kids. It has such an impact on Benymon that he aspires to start his own celebrity weekend in New York, where he is from.

"My message is that there are other places that you can go to other than jail," Benymon said. Put God first and you've got to keep your head up,"

Deeply saddened by the violence that has plagued his hometown, Will Smith said that his long-time friend Mack serves as a positive role model.

"I have known Charlie Mack for a lot of years and has seen how he has changed his life and become a shining example of the possibilities of what Philadelphia can produce," Smith said, "I like the contrast of partying for peace." For more information, visit CharlieMackCelebrityWeekend.com or call (215) 665-0787. Event tickets can be purchased through Ticketmaster.

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DETAILS

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