



# Press Release

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For Immediate Release:  
October 3, 2022

## DUPAGE SPORTS COMMISSION AND FORMER NBA PLAYER NICK ANDERSON TEAM UP FOR AREA YOUTH

*Owning Your Path, a several-day program led by Anderson, teaches wellness, career pathways, and basketball fundamentals for growth and success.*

**OAK BROOK, IL** — This past Saturday, the Madison Meadow Athletic Center in Lombard, Illinois lit up with star-struck faces, cheers, and dribbling from more than 100 kids lucky enough to spend the day with Former Fighting Illini and Former NBA Player Nick Anderson. Hosted by the DuPage Sports Commission (DSC) in partnership with Anderson and sponsors LiftMaster, Leaders In Transformational Education (LITE Leaders), and Limitless LLC, the event was a first for Anderson in DuPage County and the initial community-driven initiative for the DSC.

Anderson was the Orlando Magic's first-ever NBA Draft selection out of the University of Illinois and 11th overall in the 1989 NBA Draft. Anderson played 10 seasons for Orlando from 1989 to 1999. Anderson's time is now focused on developing and guiding the next generation of athletes. His Flight25 program offers one-of-a-kind coaching, life training, and mentorship experiences, which served girls and boys grades six through twelve during its DuPage program. Today, Anderson looks to bridge the gap between purpose and intentionality, leading with self-discovery and a strong growth mindset that aspiring players can apply both on and off the court.

"When we were presented with the unique opportunity to work with Nick Anderson, we jumped at it," said DSC Director of Sports Igor Bakovic. "I played professional basketball in Europe and can personally speak to how sports shaped my life. On our DSC brochure, we say: *Behind every championship is a story. And behind every story, a face.* Today is a shining example of that — the future lies ahead for each of these kids, each with their own story, and each with their own unique path."

The basketball clinic included a breakdown of various fundamental and advanced dribbling, shooting, and attacking drills as well as concentrated one-on-one coaching from Anderson — a unique opportunity to learn directly from one of the game's greatest players from Illinois. Anderson was able to share words of wisdom on the importance of maintaining physical and mental health alongside growth in discipline and transferrable skills. The fun atmosphere was complete with autograph signing, photo opportunities, and even an assist from Michael Jordan's Steak House which designed and sponsored the complimentary clinic t-shirt.

Post clinic, high school students were invited to stay for a Sports Career Panel and 3 on 3 basketball tournament presented by LITE Leaders — an organization dedicated to helping youth ages 16 to 24 find their individual pathway to self-sufficiency and upwardly mobile careers through experiential learning. The Sports Career Panel included Anderson alongside several professionals in the Chicago sports industry. Participation in the basketball clinic and LITE Leaders program was free for all the kids.

The basketball clinic and LITE Leaders event were the culmination of a several-day program of special appearances and curated conversations featuring guest appearances by Anderson and music and entertainment executive Rel Carter, Director of Artist Relations at Equity Distribution. The program, appropriately named *Owning Your Path*, is the end result of a vision shared by Anderson, Bakovic, Carter, and LITE Leaders Chief Executive Director Dr. Candace Thier — to come together for the kids, with a forward-focused message and wellness component. Marquell Oliver, Founder of 2Oliver LLC and local basketball coach, was instrumental in the program's creation,



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playing a key role in connecting partners and managing various program components.

Owning Your Path included stops at Glenbard North High School, Thayer J Hill Middle School, and Fischer Middle School with a common goal: encourage students to dream big about their futures — the tools they need are around them... in school, in their communities, and within themselves. Anderson and Carter were able to share with students the principles behind their successes: focus, skills attainment, commitment, and a leadership mentality. As sports and entertainment are intrinsically connected, Anderson and Carter were also able to speak to the wealth of people and talents needed to drive these industries, highlighting professions such as journalism, videography, management, and more.

“These last few days have been an incredible opportunity for me to show kids what they can do today to be successful tomorrow,” said Nick Anderson. “Sports and entertainment provide a platform to engage and inspire, and I think we accomplished that. Thank you to Rel Carter for sharing with us his time and talents; the schools and families for embracing this program; our sponsors for joining us in mission and vision; and to DSC and its partners for welcoming me to DuPage.”

The DSC recently released its vision statement titled “GPS: Grow. Prosper. Share.” which serves as a compass to guide DSC in its corporate and community engagement. GPS is comprised of four pillars: Wellness, Youth Pathways, Education, and Quality of Place — each considered a natural extension of DSC’s work alongside the values and resources within DuPage County. As DSC’s first community-driven initiative, Owning Your Path aligned with three of the four pillars.

Bakovic emphasized the timing of this event, noting the mental health crisis among young people during and coming out of the pandemic. “We know pieces of the puzzle for mentally healthy kids include school engagement, physical activity, and positive outlook for the future. We are aware of the unique platform sports provide and were committed to the collaboration and investment needed to deliver a program of this magnitude. I want to personally thank DuPage County Regional Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darlene Ruscitti and our sponsors for their support.”

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## **About the DuPage Sports Commission**

Created by the not-for-profit organization DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB), the DuPage Sports Commission (DSC) was founded in 2019 to harness the power of sports tourism on behalf of the County’s 38 communities and one million residents. The DSC is uniquely positioned to advocate for and actively impact the health of DuPage communities through strategic growth as an amateur, youth, and professional sporting destination. For more information, visit [www.DuPageSportsCommission.com](http://www.DuPageSportsCommission.com).