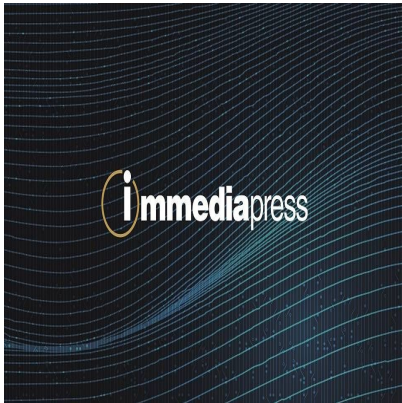




CITY OF CHICAGO PARTNERS WITH CHICAGO RIVER SWIM TO RE-LAUNCH THE BIG JUMP, EXPAND FIELD TO 750 SWIMMERS

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

Chicago River Swim presented by the City of Chicago and Mayor Brandon Johnson returns September 18, 2020 with Olympians, Paralympians, international athletes and civic leaders, including the Lord Mayor of Dublin, joining Chicagoans to celebrate the river's transformation

CHICAGO, Sept. 8, 2026 /PRNewswire/ The Chicago River Swim presented by the City of Chicago and Mayor Brandon Johnson will bring back The Big Jump and expand the 2026 field to 750 qualified swimmers. Registration is now open for both events at ChicagoRiverSwim.org.

The Big Jump will kick off the weekend on Friday, September 18, giving registered members of the public a rare, sanctioned opportunity to enter the river while raising funds for ALS research and youth swim education. Mayor Johnson will serve as master of ceremonies, joined by Olympians and Paralympians from the U.S. and abroad, including Dutch Olympic gold medalist Maarten van der Weijden and Czech ice-swimming world champion Max Munson, along with international civic leaders including Lord Mayor of Dublin Daryl Barron and notable Chicagoans including Chicago Bears legend Charles Tillman and GRAMMY Award-winning producer and DJ White Shadow.

"The Chicago River belongs to all of Chicago, and The Big Jump is a powerful way to celebrate how far our city has come," said Mayor Brandon Johnson. "For generations, Chicagoans have worked to restore this river and reconnect our communities to it. This September, people from across our city and around the world will have the opportunity to experience the river in a whole new way, while supporting ALS research and making sure more young people have access to lifesaving swim and water-safety education."

The Big Jump revives an event first held in 2017, when Cook County Commissioner Josina Morita and Friends of the Chicago River brought public officials together in Chinatown for a sanctioned jump into

the river. The event celebrated progress in restoring the river and demonstrated a shared commitment to making the Chicago-Calumet River system safely swimmable and accessible to all.

The Chicago River Swim presented by the City of Chicago and Mayor Brandon Johnson is a charitable open-water event held along the main stem of the Chicago River. Launched in 2025, the inaugural event brought 263 swimmers into the river for Chicago's first organized open-water swim in 98 years and attracted international attention to the city's transformed waterway.

"Last year proved that swimming could return to the Chicago River and become something meaningful for the entire city," said Doug McConnell, founder of A Long Swim and the Chicago River Swim. "This year, we are creating more ways for people to be part of that experience, from opening The Big Jump to the public to welcoming more swimmers. Every participant will help us raise critical funds for ALS research and bring lifesaving swim education to more Chicago children."

This year's Chicago River Swim will take place Sunday, September 20. The City of Chicago has expanded the field from 500 to 750 qualified swimmers, reopening registration for a limited number of participants in the one- and two-mile events.

The expanded weekend reflects decades of investment, advocacy, research and collaboration that have improved water quality and transformed the Chicago River into one of the city's most important recreational and civic assets. That progress has been advanced by the City of Chicago, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, Friends of the Chicago River, Current, Shedd Aquarium, the Chicago Park District and many other public, nonprofit and community partners. Water quality will be closely monitored leading up to and throughout the weekend, including testing conducted by water-quality experts at the University of Illinois Chicago.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION Olympians, Paralympians, accomplished swimmers and civic leaders from Chicago, across the United States and around the world will come together for Swim Weekend, with athletes and civic leaders traveling from the Netherlands, Mexico, the Czech Republic and Ireland. Their participation reflects a shared commitment to the lifesaving importance of learning to swim and global solidarity around protecting, restoring and reconnecting people with rivers and urban waterways.

U.S. Olympic silver medalist Maritza Correia McClendon will participate in both events on behalf of the USA Swimming Foundation. The first Black American woman to make a U.S. Olympic swim team, she will highlight the Foundation's partnership with the Chicago River Swim and their shared commitment to expanding access to lifesaving swim lessons and water-safety education.

"The Chicago River Swim is more than an unforgettable experience through one of our nation's most iconic waterways; it's an opportunity to create lasting impact," said Correia McClendon. "I'm proud to support its partnership with the USA Swimming Foundation, helping more children and families across Chicago gain lifesaving skills that can last a lifetime."

Three-time U.S. Olympian and Olympic gold medalist Blake Pieroni will compete in Sunday's one-mile Swim. A native of Chesterton, Indiana, Pieroni won Olympic gold as a member of both the 2016 and 2020 U.S. 4x100-meter freestyle relay teams.

Dutch Olympic gold medalist Maarten van der Weijden will travel from the Netherlands to represent his country and will participate in The Big Jump on Friday. A leukemia survivor who won Olympic gold in open-water swimming, he has since used extraordinary endurance swims to raise millions for cancer research. Chicago's connection to European urban swimming extends beyond this year's participants. Swim founder Doug McConnell was inspired by Amsterdam's relationship with its waterways and the success of the Amsterdam City Swim, which demonstrated how an urban waterway could become the centerpiece of a world-class community event. McConnell often credits that inspiration as part of his vision for bringing a river swim to Chicago.

Mexican Olympic swimmer Jorge Andr s Iga C sar will represent Mexico in The Big Jump on Friday. Iga C sar competed at the 2024 Paris Games and holds Mexico's national record in the 200-meter freestyle. He has earned four Pan American Games medals, including silver, and 19 medals at the Central American and Caribbean Games.

Two-time U.S. Paralympian and Tokyo silver medalist Ahalya Lettenberger will participate in The Big Jump and will compete in the one-mile Swim. Born in Chicago, Lettenberger began swimming at age 11 and went on to represent the United States at the Tokyo and Paris Paralympic Games.

Paralympic silver medalist Grace Nuhfer will participate in The Big Jump on Friday. The Indiana native won silver at the 2024 Paris Games in the S13 100-meter butterfly before becoming world champion in the event in 2025. She also earned two World Championships bronze medals in freestyle.

Current ice-swimming world champion Max Munson will participate in The Big Jump on Friday and compete in the one-mile Swim. Munson will join the weekend from Prague, Czech Republic. An accomplished pool, open-water and winter swimmer, he is the reigning age-group ice-swimming world champion in the 50-meter and 100-meter freestyle and has set multiple Czech freestyle records.

The weekend will also welcome international civic leadership, including Lord Mayor of Dublin Daryl Barron, who will travel to Chicago to attend the Chicago River Swim. Elected officials, celebrities, civic leaders and other special guests will also participate, with additional names to be announced.

"Dublin and Chicago have a strong historical and cultural connection, and I am delighted to be in Chicago to experience the Chicago River Swim," said Lord Mayor of Dublin Daryl Barron. "In Dublin, our annual Dublin City Liffey Swim brings approximately 300 swimmers through the heart of the city in a unique challenge. Rivers are an important part of the life of a city, and both Chicago and Dublin are leading the way in showcasing them as important civic assets to be used and enjoyed by the people of our cities. I look forward to experiencing the Chicago River Swim and bringing some learnings back to Dublin."

HOW TO JOIN THE BIG JUMPA limited number of spots will be available to the public for The Big Jump. The cost to participate is \$500 per jumper, with proceeds supporting ALS research and youth swim education. Participants who raise \$1,000 or more may bring one guest to the event; guests will not participate in the jump.

Participants will enter the river in small groups throughout the morning. Each registered jumper will receive a personal swim buoy, robe, commemorative T-shirt, lunch, and a goodie bag. Registration is available at chicagoriverswim.org.

HOW TO JOIN THE CHICAGO RIVER SWIMThe Swim is open to qualified swimmers participating in either the one- or two-mile event. With the field expanded to 750 swimmers, a limited number of additional spots are now available. Qualified swimmers interested in participating can review the requirements and apply at chicagoriverswim.org.

ABC7 CHICAGO LIVESTREAMABC7 Chicago will stream the Swim live on Sunday, September 20, from 6:30 to 10:00 a.m. Hosted by Greg Dutra and Jasmine Minor, the broadcast will showcase swimmers participating in one- and two-mile events along the main stem of the Chicago River and feature interviews with athletes, civic leaders and other special guests throughout the morning. Audiences can watch on ABC7Chicago.com, Disney+ under the Live tab by selecting ABC7 Chicago, and ABC7's Connected TV apps on Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Apple TV and Roku.

SWIMMING FOR A PURPOSEChicago River Swim weekend raises funds for ALS research through A Long Swim and supports swim instruction and water safety education for children in underserved Chicago communities. McConnell founded A Long Swim after losing his father and sister to ALS. The organization has since raised more than \$3.5 million to advance collaborative ALS research.

The weekend will also create a powerful moment for the ALS community. Through ALS United, A Long Swim connected with Jeff Birkels, who is living with ALS. During Sunday's Chicago River Swim, swimmer Paul Sommer will pull Birkels on a raft for the entire two-mile course, giving him an extraordinary opportunity to experience the river alongside the swimmers supporting the fight against the disease.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO RIVER SWIM PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF CHICAGO AND MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSONThe Chicago River Swim presented by the City of Chicago and Mayor Brandon Johnson is a charitable open-water event that brings together swimmers, advocates, civic leaders, environmental partners, and community members to celebrate the Chicago River and its extraordinary transformation. The City of Chicago and Mayor Brandon Johnson are serving as Presenting Partner, reflecting the City's leadership in restoring the river and expanding safe public access to its waterways. Their support enabled an event of this scale to take place in the center of downtown, reinforcing the river's transformation and establishing the Chicago River Swim as a growing civic tradition. Launched in 2025, the Swim marked a historic moment as the first organized open-water swim in the Chicago River in 98 years. The event celebrates decades of environmental investment, policy leadership, and community effort that have made the river safe for human contact and renewed public use. Created by A Long Swim, the Chicago River Swim raises critical funds for ALS research and expands access to swim education and water safety for youth in underserved communities, while positioning the Chicago River as a shared civic asset and a symbol of Chicago's environmental progress. For more information, visit ChicagoRiverSwim.org.

ABOUT A LONG SWIMA Long Swim is a nonprofit that designs and manages open-water swimming events to raise funds for ALS research. Founded by siblings Doug McConnell and Ellen McConnell Blakeman after their father passed away from ALS, and Ellen was later diagnosed with the disease, the organization has raised more than \$3.5 million for ALS research at Ozdinler Lab of Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Doug, a world-class marathon swimmer, has conquered some of the most challenging waters in the world, including the English Channel, Manhattan Island, the Catalina Channel, and the Molokai Channel, using his skills to raise funds for the fight against ALS.

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