

Celebs flock to 6th anti-violence weekend

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It's that time of year, again, when stars from Hollywood and the sports world converge on Philadelphia for the Charlie Mack Party 4 Peace Celebrity Weekend. The 6th annual event - from tonight to Monday morning - is expected to draw close to 50 stars.

Headliners include Academy Award-nominated actor Terrence Howard, fellow actors Tyrese Gibson, Nia Long, Meagan Good and NBA stars Lou Williams of the 76ers, and Jameer Nelson of the Orlando Magic. As in years past, the weekend's festivities are intended to draw attention to urban violence and to raise funds for community organizations on the front lines, including Mothers in Charge.

"It's a sad reality that a lot of parents can't get to these kids like celebrities can," event founder Charles "Charlie" Mack said yesterday. "We are trying to bring about dialogue and change." Mack, a Philly native, best pal of Will Smith, movie producer and hip-hop recording manager, said he knows first-hand the pain of street violence.

The murders of his brothers - one in 1994 and another in 2004 - first put Mack in contact with the Mother's in Charge victim support group and inspired him to start the event. Mack said that because covering costs for the stars limits the money that's donated to anti-violence groups, the weekend's dialogue component could prove priceless to young people who participate.

"It is our responsibility," he said, "to step up and be accountable for the youth." The first event, Laff 4 Peace, kicks off at 8 tonight at Yesha Fellowship Hall, 23rd Street and Snyder Avenue. Jvonne Pearson hosts and comedians on the bill include G-Thang, Hope Flood, Red Grant, TuRae, Jamal Daman and Naimlyn. Tickets are \$20. Tomorrow, the stars will join education, law-enforcement and city officials to visit children at the Youth Study Center.

Afterward, the entertainers and athletes will participate in a panel discussion and luncheon for children at Peco's Market Street headquarters. Both events are by invitation only. On Sunday, events open to the public include free asthma screenings and asthma-management-and-control workshops from noon to 4 p.m. at Temple University's Liacouras Center.

The 65 children from the Creative Steps day camp, who this month were barred from a private Huntingdon Valley swimming pool, will be recognized during the event and given celebrity gift bags, said Devon M. Allen, a spokesman for the weekend. The weekend's signature event, a celebrity basketball game, will start at 6 p.m. at the Liacouras Center. Among the NBA stars playing are Williams, his 76ers teammate Marreese Speights, Kyle Lowry, Hakim Warrick, Rasual Butler and Jason Thompson. Old-school rapper Doug E. Fresh and newcomers Meek Mill and Yung LA will perform at half-time. The weekend wraps up with an after-game party at Luxe Lounge, 718 Arch Street.