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***FIRST LADY MCCRAY, MAYOR'S FUND TO ADVANCE NYC, U.S. SOCCER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK CITY FOOTBALL CLUB, ADIDAS AND ETIHAD AIRWAYS KICK-OFF OPENING OF FIRST TEN SOCCER FIELDS AS PART OF NEW YORK CITY SOCCER INITIATIVE***

***\$3 million public-private partnership on track to build 50 mini-soccer pitches over five years, and expand afterschool programming to reach 10,000 young people***



**NEW YORK**—First Lady Chirlane McCray, Senior Advisor to the Mayor and Director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships Gabrielle Fialkoff, and Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, were joined today by New York City Football Club players, community leaders, agency partners and philanthropic sponsors for a ribbon cutting at P.S. 083 Luis Munoz Rivera / P.S. 182 The Bilingual Bicultural School in Harlem to inaugurate the first ten new mini-soccer pitches across the City. The event kicks off a day of soccer at new pitches in all five boroughs. These fields are the first to open as part of the [New York City Soccer Initiative](#), launched by Mayor de Blasio last year, a public-private partnership to over the next five years, and expand afterschool programming for thousands of New York City youth.

The initiative is led by the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, New York City Football Club, adidas and Etihad Airways. The New York City Soccer Initiative

supports Mayor de Blasio's Building Healthy Communities initiative and the shared goal of ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages can live, work, learn and play in healthy, safe neighborhoods.

"Participating in sports while I was growing up contributed a great deal to the person I am today. I want every child in New York City to have that same opportunity. The NYC Soccer Initiative provides our most vulnerable youth communities with valuable programming and life-long mentors to enrich their lives," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, Chair of the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC**.

"Thanks to all of our partners, the New York City Soccer Initiative is not only expanding access to physical activity in our city's most historically underserved communities, but it is giving NYC youth the confidence and experience they need to thrive. Public private partnerships can lead the way to change, and in this case, the creation of vibrant playing fields and the Soccer For Success program will enhance our communities in all five boroughs, said **Gabrielle Fialkoff, Senior Advisor to the Mayor and Director of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Partnerships**. "We are thrilled to launch the first 10 mini-soccer pitches of the NYC Soccer initiative today and look forward to the next 40, and the joy and achievement that comes from all who play and learn on these fields."

"We are delighted to have Mayor de Blasio's office, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, the New York City Football Club and adidas invest in our parks. Adding amenities like these newly opened soccer pitches broadens opportunities for neighborhood children to become involved and active in this globally loved sport," said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**.

"This investment in new soccer fields will bring school communities together and encourage teamwork and exercise among students," said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina**. "We thank our partners at NYCFC for their support in helping us bring high-quality afterschool opportunities to hundreds of families in all five boroughs."

Pioneering a national movement to increase soccer opportunities in dense urban settings, private partners have pledged to invest a total of \$3 million in the new soccer pitches and provide free programming for New York City school children focused on healthy, active living. Youth programming will reach 10,000 young people over 5-years with after-school soccer and mentoring programs that promote safe, active and connected communities. The New York City Soccer Initiative is an inter-agency partnership between the Mayor's Office of Strategic Partnerships, The Mayor's Fund, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Education, and the Department of Youth and Community Development.

At today's main ribbon cutting ceremony at P.S. 083 Luis Munoz Rivera in Harlem, New York City Football Club players joined school children from the East Harlem neighborhood for a soccer scrimmage to break in the new fields. Later this afternoon, New York City FC and partners will host local soccer festivals at additional New York City Soccer Initiative pitches, one in each of the five boroughs.

Through the construction of these new play spaces, the New York City Soccer Initiative aims to create safe spaces for youth and wider communities to gather, repurpose underutilized spaces in targeted neighborhoods, and connect more young people to soccer, expand U.S. Soccer Foundation's nationally-recognized soccer after-school program – *Soccer for Success* – and 'City in the Community' schools program.

The New York City Soccer Initiative fields will be constructed to ensure year-round functionality. In addition, the New York City Football Club will create a fund to support the ongoing maintenance of the fields. Targeted neighborhoods were determined by place-based Mayoral Initiatives, including the Community Parks Initiative, Building Healthy Communities, and the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety.

The first 10 sites are as follows:

1. Hillside Park/Irwin Altman Middle School 172, Queens, Parks
2. Frederick Johnson Playground, Manhattan, Parks
3. P.S. 083 Luis Munoz Rivera, Manhattan, DOE
4. Eagle Academy For Young Men Of Staten Island/I.S.49 Berta A. Dreyfus, Staten Island, DOE
5. P.S. 093 Albert G. Oliver, Bronx, DOE
6. P.S. 019 Marino Jeantet, Queens, DOE
7. P.S. 184 Shuang Wen, Manhattan, DOE
8. Woods Playground/P.S.335 Granville T. Woods, Brooklyn, Parks
9. Triboro Bridge Playground, Queens, Parks
10. P.S. 66, Brooklyn, DOE

"Soccer has gained significant traction among our youth, with 7,500 young people across the City participating in DYCD's 'Soccer for Success' program this school year. With the NYC Soccer Initiative, we will reach thousands more—especially as we open up these ten new mini-soccer pitches," said **NYC Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Bill Chong**. "I want to thank Mayor de Blasio, the Mayor's Fund, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, the New York City Football Club, Adidas, Etihad Airways, and all the partners involved for building a meaningful program to help keep our young people engaged, and promoting team work and good physical health."

"We are excited to celebrate the opening of the first ten mini-pitches, which provide greater access to safe playing spaces and quality programming for youth where they live, play and go to school," said Ed Foster-Simeon, president & CEO of the U.S. Soccer Foundation. "We are honored to work with our partners and the City of New York who recognize the power of soccer to bring communities together, address pressing issues, and help youth embrace healthy, active lifestyles and learn critical life skills they need both on and off the field. Together, we are igniting an urban soccer movement that is spreading to other cities throughout the country," said **Ed Foster-Simeon, President & CEO of the U.S. Soccer Foundation**.

"We know that soccer can empower young people's lives and in turn, they can improve their communities. We are a part of our communities across the five boroughs and that's why we are creating 50 safe spaces to play free soccer, starting with the 10 we are launching today. The New

York City Soccer Initiative pitches, along with other ‘City in the Community’ (CITC) programs, have the potential to provide community hubs that bring neighborhoods together,” said **Jon Patricof, President of New York City Football Club**.

“We at adidas believe that through sports, we have the power to change people’s lives,” states **Niels Rossow, General Manager of New York City and Los Angeles for adidas**. “Following last year’s announcement to create and maintain 50 soccer fields in underserved communities across the five boroughs, we are eager and excited to commemorate the opening of the first 10 pitches. The social, emotional and physical benefits that these fields will offer young people will live on for years to come, reaching far beyond the neighborhoods they serve. It has been such an honor working with our partners - New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio, the Mayor’s Fund to Advance NYC, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, New York City Football Club and Etihad Airways - to realize the vision for these pitches and we, at adidas, are excited to watch them become an integral part of the surrounding communities.”

**Patrick Pierce, Etihad Airways Vice President – Marketing Partnerships**, said: “As the national airline of the UAE, Etihad Airways is committed to demonstrating the generosity of the Emirati spirit throughout all aspects of our business. Thanks to our partnership with City Football Group, New York City Football Club and Major League Soccer, we are pleased to support soccer’s tremendous growth in the U.S. and beyond, reinforcing our commitment to North America and its millions of dedicated soccer fans. During the UAE’s Year of Giving in 2017, we are especially proud to contribute positively to the health and wellness of local communities and celebrate the undeniable power of soccer to unite and inspire fans around the world.”

“These 10 soccer sites – the first of 50 that will launch over the next four years – and the programming that will come with them will help us create more connected, active, and healthy communities that had been historically under-invested. The New York City Soccer initiative was born of a shared commitment and vision of all our partners, and the outcome is a testament to the value of public-private partners in helping create positive impacts across the five boroughs,” said **Darren Bloch, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Fund to Advance NYC**.

“Soccer has an estimated 4 billion fans worldwide, and thousands of fans reside in New York City alone. The innovative partnership between the U.S. Soccer Foundation, New York City Football Club, Adidas, Etihad Airways, and the City of New York will open new avenues for both fans and newcomers to play soccer,” said **U.S. Representative Adriano Espallat**. “The fifty new soccer fields will allow residents in all five boroughs to spectate and participate in the beloved sport. I commend Mayor de Blasio and community leader on their ingenuity to find unique partnerships to further expand recreational offerings throughout our city.”

**State Senator Jose M. Serrano** said, “Physical activity and sports are some of the best way for youngsters to stay healthy while fighting the epidemic of obesity in our community. I applaud Mayor de Blasio’s commitment to ensuring the youth in our community have the space and equipment they need to be active, healthy and happy.”

"I am happy to celebrate the opening of 10 new soccer fields here in the City. The New York City Soccer initiative will keep kids engaged in physical fitness and healthy living, and give our children exciting afterschool programming in a sport that's ever growing in popularity," said **Assemblymember Robert J. Rodriguez**.

"Soccer is the world's sport, so there is no better place to connect the local Major League Soccer club with the youth than the most diverse city in the country. New York City is home to people from every continent and it is only right that we provide the community with public soccer pitches to play the beautiful game," said **Assemblymember Francisco Moya**. "I firmly believe that through soccer our children will learn teamwork, discipline, and healthy habits. I thank NYCFC and the Mayor's Fund for creating and executing such a noble initiative."

"We are grateful for this soccer field as it's a new space for positive fun and play and it also offers an opportunity to be on a team," said **Kelly Villar, chair of Staten Island CB1 Youth Committee**. "For many youth in this community, it will be their first chance being on a team experiencing all the great character building lessons that come with it...on winning, losing, team building, and leadership to name a few. We hope this field is only the beginning."

"Crutches 4 Kids is excited to join the Mayor's Office at the launch of such an impactful initiative that is essential to the progression of our youth and communities throughout NYC. We distributed Crutches to a soccer team of amputees in Haiti and we saw firsthand the importance of play and teamwork through the universal sport of soccer. Crutches 4 Kids is a true supporter of these types of initiatives because they do more than just build soccer players, they build strong communities and our future leaders," said **Ramón Peña, Executive Director of Crutches 4 Kids, Inc.**

#### **About the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City**

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, chaired by First Lady Chirlane McCray, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization committed to promoting partnerships between the City and the private sector in support of high-impact public programs. The Mayor's Fund is focused on serving as a vehicle for the generous business and philanthropic communities to contribute to City programs and enhance the lives of New Yorkers in areas ranging from mental health, to youth workforce development, to immigration and citizenship. To learn more about the Mayor's Fund, visit [nyc.gov/fund](http://nyc.gov/fund).

#### **About the U.S. Soccer Foundation**

The U.S. Soccer Foundation's programs are the national model for sports-based youth development in underserved communities. Since its founding in 1994, the Foundation has established programs proven to help children embrace an active and healthy lifestyle while nurturing their personal growth beyond sports. Its cost-effective, high-impact initiatives offer safe environments where kids and communities thrive. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Soccer Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information visit [www.ussoccerfoundation.org](http://www.ussoccerfoundation.org) or follow us on Twitter at [@ussoccerfndn](https://twitter.com/ussoccerfndn) and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ussoccerfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/ussoccerfoundation).

### **About New York City Football Club**

New York City Football Club is an American professional soccer team based in New York City that competes in Major League Soccer. It was announced as the league's twentieth franchise on May 21, 2013 and is the first and only Major League Soccer Club located within the five boroughs of New York City. Majority owned by City Football Group, which includes Manchester City FC, Melbourne City FC and Yokohama F. Marinos, New York City FC plays its home games at Yankee Stadium, which is also home to minority owner, the New York Yankees.

New York City FC is embarking on its third ever season in 2017 and has former US National Team captain Claudio Reyna as its Sporting Director and former World Cup winner Patrick Vieira as its coach, in addition to Designated Players: Captain David Villa, Andrea Pirlo, and Maxi Moralez.

### **About adidas Soccer**

adidas is the global leader in soccer. It is the official sponsor and official supplier partner of the most important soccer tournaments in the world, such as the FIFA World Cup™, the FIFA Confederations Cup, Major League Soccer, the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Europa League and the UEFA European Championships. adidas also sponsors some of the world's top clubs including Manchester United, Real Madrid, FC Bayern Munich, Juventus, Chelsea and AC Milan. Some of the world's best players also on the adidas roster are Leo Messi, Paul Pogba, Gareth Bale, Thomas Müller, Luis Suárez, James Rodríguez, Diego Costa and Mesut Özil.

### **About Etihad Airways**

Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) is a diversified global aviation and travel group comprising five business divisions – Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, Etihad Airways Engineering, Etihad Airport Services, Hala Group and Airline Equity Partners. The group has minority investments in six airlines: airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways and Virgin Australia.

From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to, or has announced plans to serve, more than 110 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of over 120 Airbus and Boeing aircraft. In 2013, it placed firm orders for 204 aircraft, which included 71 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and 10 Airbus A380s.

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