

Houston to host Junior Olympics

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine, Sports Editor
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The city of Houston will play host to the 2012 Junior Olympic Games, July 25th-August 4th. Approximately 15,000 participants representing the 50 states and U.S. territories will take part in 18 various sports, with AAU national champions being crowned in each one.

With an estimated 30,000 spectators, the economic impact for the local host communities is estimated at over \$60 million. Over 2,000 volunteers are needed for this prestigious, national event. "The AAU Junior Olympic Games prides itself with the Nation's most outstanding athletes year in and year out," Paul Campbell, Chairman of the AAU stated. "This event provides a unique opportunity for youth athletes of different sports to come together." Founded in 1888, the Amateur Athletic Union is one of the largest, non-profit, sport organization, the AAU is dedicated exclusively to the promotion and development of amateur sports and physical fitness programs for all ages. Over 500,000 participants and 50,000 volunteers share AAU's philosophy of "Sports for All Forever."

Future host cities for the AAU include: Detroit, Michigan in 2013, Des Moines, Iowa in 2014, Hampton Roads, Virginia in 2015, and New Orleans, Louisiana in 2016. All cities have previously hosted the event within the last five years with the exception of the first time 2012 host, Houston. "The AAU Junior Olympic Games are in the hands of five outstanding communities that care about the youth of today," stated Bobby Dodd, President and CEO of the Amateur Athletic Union.

"We are excited to be returning to cities that have a successful track record of hosting this event. With the addition of Houston, a new host city to the rotation, the event will continue to exceed the expectations of the participants and their families."

The AAU Junior Olympic Games is the annual showcase event for the AAU. Participants will take part in over 20 sports during a two-week period each summer. With an estimated 30,000 spectators, the economic impact for the local host communities is estimated at over \$40 million. "This is a terrific opportunity for the city of Houston to once again showcase its world class facilities and hospitality," Kenny Friedman, Chairman of the Harris County Houston Sports Authority said.

Since its beginning in Washington, D.C. in 1967, the AAU Junior Olympic Games have been conducted in 19 states and 30 cities across the country. The AAU boasts a long list of

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well-known alumni including Evelyn Ashford, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Carl Lewis, Vonetta Flowers, Bart Conner, Shannon Miller, Morgan White, Tracy Caulkins, Magic Johnson, Shaquille O'Neal, Allen Iverson, Lisa Leslie, and Sue Bird. "The AAU Junior Olympic Games prides itself with the Nation's most outstanding athletes year in and year out. This event provides a unique opportunity for young athletes of different sports to come together. Track and field is the leading sport in the event with around 10,000 athletes, making it the largest meet in the United States."