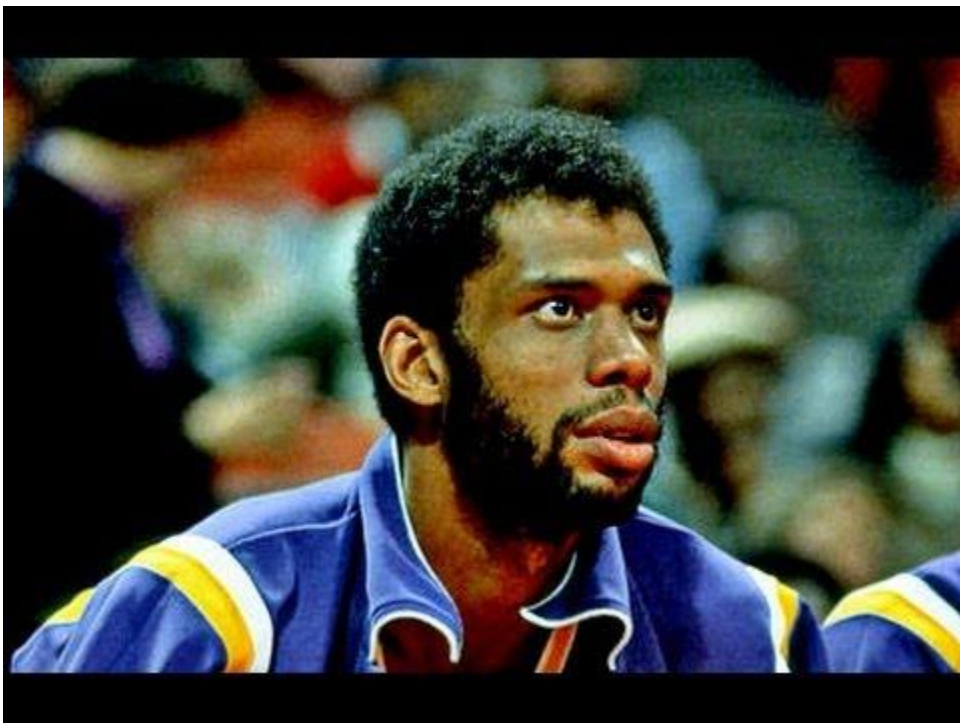




MJCH makes big announcement - former NBA, college star Kareem Abdul Jabaar to speak March 30

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities made an announcement this afternoon of some big news – legendary **UCLA and Los Angeles Lakers’ player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** will be featured guest at an upcoming fundraiser on Thursday, March 30, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

“Thanks to Mannie Jackson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will join us as our special guest at this highly anticipated event,” **MJCH Executive Director Dr. Ed Hightower** said. “The format will be similar to the event we held in 2016 featuring Colin Powell, with guests receiving cocktails, dinner, and then a Q&A between Abdul-Jabbar, moderated by St. Louis' **CBS Channel 4 anchor Steve Savard**.

“Kareem is one of the greatest basketball players of all time, and the NBA's all-time leading scorer. He is also a best-selling author, executive producer and a nationally respected humanitarian. We invite you to learn more about Kareem’s passion for making this country a better, unified place to live, work and succeed. We hope that you will support the MJCHF by attending this fundraiser.”

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is well known as The NBAs all-time leading scorer and a six-time NBA champion and a six-time MVP. He is also the author of twelve New York Times best-sellers and a columnist for various news outlets throughout the world such as Time Magazine, The Hollywood Reporter and The Washington Post. Abdul-Jabbar also co-wrote and executive produced the critically acclaimed award-winning documentary entitled, “*On the Shoulders of Giants*”. In 2016, HBO released *Kareem: Minority of One*, which quickly became their most watched sport film of all time.

Dedicating his life to social justice, in 2012 he was appointed as the only U.S. Cultural Ambassador by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In 2016, he was awarded the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** by President Barack Obama, our nation’s highest civilian honor.

“We are honored to have Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, one of the greatest basketball players and humanitarian of all times, as our special guest”, said Dr. Hightower. “His life work and experiences serves as a cultural voice for what the Mannie Jackson Center stands for: respect, dignity, understanding and forgiveness.”

“I’ve known Kareem for a long time and witnessed his commitment and passion for country unification and equality for all. He has created a footprint to make this world a better place,” said **MJCH founder and president, Mannie Jackson**. “The Presidential

Medal of Freedom is presented only to those who have made admirable contributions to the interests of the United States, and Kareem's influence on our society has been impactful in many, many ways. We are fortunate to have him at our upcoming event."

Tickets are limited and are \$200 each. [Purchase Tickets Here](#)

Hightower said he is pleased to share some other exciting activities occurring at the MJCH Center while also sharing news about recent programs, events and accomplishments in the year ahead

"Namely, we are pleased to report that more than **4,000 people attended the 90 events held at the MJCH® in 2016**," Hightower said. "We have made great strides in raising awareness of the MJCH® and its purpose to create communities that embrace respect, dignity, understanding and forgiveness - our four core principles. We have many programs under way and events that we hope you will attend to help us keep the momentum we have going throughout the year and beyond."

MJCH® Education Initiatives Continue to Progress and Gain Financial Support

MJCH® has several educational initiatives underway including the **Conversation Toward a Brighter Future (CTBF)** program in Madison County Schools as well as the **MJCH® STEM INITIATIVE**.

Conversation Toward a Brighter Future (CTBF) Kicks off in Madison County Schools

CTBF is aimed at engaging high school and middle school students in dialogue and decision making regarding issues that impact their communities and school districts while also emphasizing mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultures, races, ethnicities and religions. This work among students is aimed at removing barriers that hinder individuals from achieving their full potential. Our schools are a micro-representation of this country, and now more than ever, our youth are positioned to lead our country in planning and directing generations to come. This initiative provides each school with a \$5,000 fellowship to implement their projects. Learn more about CTBF from this link [Conversation Toward a Brighter Future](#).

MJCH STEM Center Takes Shape

The **MJCH® STEM Center** is taking shape at the former Kraft House, adjacent to the MJCH® headquarters building. This center will serve as an educational initiative facility for MJCH® to use in promoting science, technology, engineering and math as viable occupations to emerging leaders. The MJCH® will partner with Madison County high

schools, middle schools, the Regional Superintendent of Education, SIUE, University of Illinois, Lewis & Clark Community College, Webster University, and St. Louis University to make this program a success.

NASA Astronaut to Speak to Local Students about STEM Careers

On Wednesday, March 29, 2017, the MJCHF will partner with the Regional Superintendent of Education, SIUE, and Lewis & Clark Community College to host former **NASA Astronaut Leland Melvin**, who flew on two Space Shuttle missions. Mr. Melvin will speak to more than 600 students from Granite City, Madison, and Venice high schools. The program will be held in the Granite City High School Auditorium. Mr. Melvin will speak on the importance of not shying away from math and science (STEM), staying focused, staying true to your dreams, and never giving up.

Please find the link to Melvin's YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEmddAPgIVI>

MJCHF Educational Programs Receive Funding and Pledges

The MJCHF received a \$30,000 National Recreation Foundation Trustee Grant to assist in developing the next generation of change agents who will learn to transform their communities through effective problem solving, team building, and enhanced access to STEM education. These funds will support low-income youth from underrepresented communities in activities and programs that they would not engage in or have access to otherwise.

The MJCHF also received financial pledges in support of programming and activities for Madison County youth from generous local donors:

- **Mannie Jackson**
- **Scott and Gayla Moore**
- **John Simmons and the Simmons Hanley Conroy law firm**
- **The law firm of Gori Julian and Associates, P.C.**
- **TheBANK of Edwardsville**
- **First Clover Leaf Bank**

“We thank our many donors for their commitment to the community, our youth and the MJCHF,” Hightower said. “As always, thank you for your interest and support of the MJCH®. As we continue to expand our footprint on the region, we are reminded of the many businesses and individuals who supported the initiative from the ground up.”