

Creating a Better Chicago For All

An Interview with Michael Reinsdorf, President and Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Bulls

EDITORS' NOTE Michael Reinsdorf is the CEO and President of the Chicago Bulls. He is an NBA Governor and serves on the NBA Media Committee and the NBA Planning Committee. Reinsdorf is a member of the Commercial Club of Chicago and serves on the boards of the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago Foundation, the Executives' Club of Chicago, After-School All-Stars, After-School Matters, World Business Chicago, The Economic Club of Chicago and on the Board of Trustees for Northwestern University and the Museum of Science and Industry. Reinsdorf is on the University of Chicago Crime Lab Investor's Council which strives to understand and reduce crime and violence in the City of Chicago through government agencies and nonprofit organizations. He is the former Chairman of the Harrisburg Senators, a Double A affiliate of the Washington Nationals. He is also the former Chairman of the Stockton Thunder, an ECHL hockey team in Stockton, California. Reinsdorf is a graduate of the University of Arizona. He and his wife, Nancy, who serves as President of Chicago Bulls Charities, have three children and reside in Chicago.



Michael Reinsdorf

As part of this investment, we work to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace from the way we hire people to our employee resource groups. It's something we pay attention to every day.

The Chicago Bulls organization commits time and resources to philanthropic work. What has made philanthropy so important, and how do you decide which areas the organization supports?

One of the best parts of running a team is the opportunity to be a true partner to the community. These are values that were instilled in the organization by my dad and that my wife, Nancy, and I do our best to carry forward today. A little over ten years ago, Nancy and I gathered our executive team to evaluate our philanthropic resources and how we could make a positive impact in the community. This group developed the framework for our community engagement strategy that we still use today.

The Chicago Bulls are focused on community violence prevention through four focus areas: education, community investments, health and wellness, and opportunity access. We are committed to using

the Bulls' platform to elevate organizations, big and small, that address critical issues in our city. The ability to do this work would not be possible without the generous contributions from our corporate partners, individuals, and fundraising programs that contribute to the team's annual grant program.

You are known as a person with clear goals and objectives. Do you look at your philanthropic work the same way?

Focus is a critical element of every efficient and effective organization. You must be able to identify where your contributions make the most impact and stick to a plan to achieve a positive outcome. We look for groups that share our goals and with expertise and authentic connections to the community we look to serve. We listen first and then work with these organizations to develop programs that will lead to impactful change by addressing the most pressing needs. This strategy has helped us stay focused and continue growing partnerships that are extremely effective and make meaningful impacts.

Thanks to the Bulls' highly engaged fans and corporate partners, we can continue to identify new-to-us organizations and strengthen long-standing relationships with highly impactful community partners.

How do you define the role of an NBA team president and how do you focus your efforts leading the Bulls?

As team president, I focus on building strong teams across basketball and business operations who will help us achieve our mission to inspire and unite people through legendary experiences. For the business, we are focused on a set of strategic priorities that include cultivating our local and global fan base, evolving our customer experience, embracing our civic responsibility, and investing in our culture.

Ultimately, our job is to make our fans proud of the team. While we know our brand has a deep history, we work hard each day to earn the trust and respect of our fans and community.

How do you describe the Chicago Bulls culture?

One of our priorities is to invest in our culture. Our leadership team is focused on fostering a collaborative and inclusive culture for Bulls employees. We know our brand is enabled by our people, which is why we consistently listen to employees to deliver a healthy and supportive culture, be it in the locker room or a conference room.



During January 2023, Chicago Bulls player Alex Caruso helped deliver meals to families and personally donated \$10,000 to Dion's Chicago Dream – a local nonprofit dedicated to creating financial, physical, and emotional stability for residents of Chicago by helping fight food insecurity in the city



Chicago Bulls guard and Chicago native Ayo Dosunmu hosts an annual community event honoring the memory of his childhood friend, Darius Brown, who was killed while playing in a pickup basketball game when he was 13 years old. This year's event was hosted in partnership with Beyond the Ball and Urban Male Network, two organizations who provide safe spaces for Chicago youth to play

Do you see it as a responsibility for business leaders and leading organizations to support the communities they serve?

Our business is built on a connection to the city and our fan base, and it is important that we use our resources and influence to make a positive impact. We know it is our responsibility to support the communities we serve and use the Bulls' platform to elevate organizations who address critical issues in our city. We feel lucky to be in a position to give back and are focused on extending our philanthropic work beyond donations to make real and lasting impact in our community.

We understand that true progress requires partnership, which is why we were founding members of the Chicago Sports Alliance, a coalition of Chicago sports teams who collectively support efforts combating gun violence. Through this coalition with our friends at the Blackhawks, White Sox, Cubs, and Bears, we support local, evidence-based solutions to gun violence through financial donations and by sharing team resources.

Will you highlight the Bulls' history of giving back and the engagement of the Bulls' players in the team's community efforts?

At the Bulls, we have a long history and focus of providing time, materials, resources, and financial support to organizations that we believe can make an impact in our community. In fact, the Bulls were the first team in the NBA to create a Community Relations department. Giving back is in our DNA. It is something my dad instilled in the organization from the start. We are proud that embracing our civic responsibility extends beyond our community relations team and is something that is embraced by the organization as a whole.

Our engagement is enhanced by our passionate players and alumni who are eager to join us in our efforts to create a better Chicago for

all. Last year, the Chicago Bulls hosted or participated in more than 175 different community events with 70 players and alumni engagements. We look forward to continuing this momentum through this season and beyond.

For example, for the past two summers, Ayo Dosunmu hosted a block party for Chicago kids. This year's event was hosted in Little Village, a neighborhood that has historically experienced high instances of violence. At the event, we partnered with local nonprofits like Beyond the Ball,

Urban Male Network, and My Brother's Keeper who have deep connections to the community and understand how to use basketball to address the effects of trauma and to create safe places for youth to play, grow, and learn.

Will you discuss some of the programs the Bulls participate in relating to youth education?

Our education programs are aimed at communities where there is a high rate of community violence. They are designed to increase resources that improve learning for youth and young adults and are aimed at enhancing student engagement, academic outcomes, and school experiences to create a more equitable learning environment.

We are really proud of the team's work in education. For example, last year we partnered with United Airlines to launch a community program that provides Latiné youth opportunities to explore professional pathways across the STEM industries – the program is set at Infinity Math, Science, and Technology High School in Little Village; and for many years we have partnered with After School Matters, an organization that strives to provide teens in Chicago's neediest neighborhoods with meaningful, firsthand opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Outside of these tentpole programs and partnerships, we continue to show up through our program, Bulls in Schools. Through this program, we invest in Chicago Public Schools and organizations to support the academic, social, physical, and emotional development of youth through PE takeovers, classroom exchange, and mentoring at Chicago Bulls College Prep, a local high school across from the United Center.

We know that when we address root causes of community violence and invest in education, we create additional opportunities for Chicago youth to thrive. ●



In partnership with the Chicago Bulls, famed Chicago streetwear designer, Don C, collaborated with students from Infinity High School from Chicago's Little Village neighborhood in designing a deck of playing cards inspired by their Latiné heritage