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Sept. 7: Chicago River Revival Festival Features Big Jump into River, Mural Dedication, Wild Animals, Live Bands at Chinatown Park

What: Chicago River Revival Festival celebrating 40th anniversary of Friends of the Chicago River and 20th anniversary of Ping Tom Memorial Park.

Will include the Big Jump! event where federal, state and local elected officials and dignitaries will leap into the Chicago River to illustrate improved water quality and press for regular swimming. Hosted by Friends and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Josina Morita.

Other events include lion dancers, Chinatown mural dedication, wildlife demonstrations, canoeing, fishing, food trucks, and live music including a string quartet and Chinese opera singers. The festival is presented by McDermott Will & Emery.

When: Saturday, September 7, 2019, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Ping Tom Memorial Park, Chicago. Media enter at 19th St. and Wells St.

9 a.m.: Press conference at pagoda
9:30 a.m.: Big Jump! from the floating dock in front of the boat house
11:45 a.m.: Lion dancers
12 noon: Dedication of new murals
12:30 p.m.: Chinese opera
3 p.m.: Blue Fish Boys Band

Why: The Big Jump! into the South Branch of the Chicago River is a public education event to highlight the collective work that has been done to improve the river’s water quality, and to show our commitment to making the Chicago River swimmable for all.
Who: Dignitaries scheduled to jump into the South Branch include U.S. Representative Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (4th), Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle; Illinois Treasurer Mike Frerichs; State Rep. Theresa Mah (2nd); State Sen. Robert Peters (13th); City of Chicago Alds. Susan Garza (10th), Byron Sigcho-Lopez (25th) and Rossana Rodriguez (33rd); Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison (15th); and MWRD Commissioners Josina Morita and Marcelino Garcia.

“When Friends was founded 40 years ago most people would have never believed that one day we would all be jumping in a river alive with wildlife let alone swimming,” said Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River’s executive director. “We are proud of the progress we have made that led to this moment and grateful to the many elected officials, nonprofits partners, and people of the region who worked with us to bring the river to life once again.

“For decades the district used to dump raw sewage into the river. Instead today we disinfect water from our O’Brien and Calumet plants so that is cleaner than the river itself and almost drinkable. We all share the goal of a clean and healthy Chicago River for everybody and believe that before long swimming won’t seem like such a surprise,” said Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Josina Morita.

“My father was a big advocate for a park in Chinatown to replace the ones that were lost when the Dan Ryan was constructed. Though he didn’t get to see it, I think he would be more than pleased to see how beautiful it is and how many people enjoy it every day,” said Ping Tom’s son Darryl Tom.

“McDermott Will & Emery is so pleased to be part of the Chicago River Revival Festival and to share in the celebration of Friends 40th anniversary,” said John Callahan, managing partner of the Chicago office. “Their efforts have transformed the riverfront and help position Chicago as a great place to live, work, and visit. We congratulate everyone on their success.”

About Friends of the Chicago River
Friends of the Chicago River is an award-winning nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River for people, plants and animals. With over 10,000 members, volunteers, and online advocates, Friends works to make the river greener and more accessible, while building awareness of the benefits that a clean, healthy river can bring to the surrounding community. Friends of the Chicago River is working to make the Chicago River one of the world’s great metropolitan rivers. For more information please visit our website www.chicagoriver.org.