



Chase turns Hub into an urban jungle gym

By Michael Marotta

Friday, July 18, 2008

Weekend warriors who've been trapped behind their desks all week will have a new playground to explore tomorrow - the entire city of Boston.

That's when City Chase, billed as the world's largest "urban adventure series," will put hundreds of Hub participants to the test in an event that's part scavenger hunt, part reality TV.

"It's a full day of really discovering your city," City Chase managing partner Jason Erkes said. "The city is working with us, and it's a very controlled environment. Nothing is dangerous."

Armed with only T passes, urban intuition and the use of Palm Centro smartphones ("hi Mom, txt 4 help, plz!"), teams of two will go from one ChasePoint location to another, collecting points and vying to cross the finish line in a single day. They can use the phones to call family or friends for assistance.

After starting at City Hall, the teams must find and complete an array of challenges. In other cities, challenges have included forms of strip bowling or strip basketball, and other things once limited to "Fear Factor"

It's a bit like 1980 cult movie "Midnight Madness," though updated with stunts borrowed from "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race."

"We were drawn to this event because after working in a cubicle all week, we need a little something to spice up the monotony," said Holly Gillette, 24, of Reading, who is on a team with friend Kaitlyn Brenner, 24, of Boston.

Though Erkes refused to reveal specific challenges until race day, City Chase organizers descended on Boston earlier this week to set up ChasePoint locations involving MIT and Boston Common.

"We really look at the landscape of a city and try to capture the local flavor," Erkes said.

Since originating in Toronto five years ago, City Chase has expanded to include eight U.S. cities this summer. Tomorrow marks its Boston debut. From here, each city's winners will vie for U.S. supremacy at a secret challenge in October.

That winner will represent Team USA in Morocco this November, competing against winners from 25 other counties around the world.

Registration for City Chase is \$170 per team. Go to citychase.com for details.