



For Immediate Release

Sports Ball Helps Kids Live Dreams and Stand Tall

Foundation Inspires Youth Across Canada through Sports

Toronto, June 9, 2003 -- The S'port for Kids Foundation (SFK Foundation) will stage its annual charity S'ports Ball on **Tuesday, June 10** (Reception-6 pm, Dinner-7 pm) with sports celebrities to raise money for disadvantaged youth who don't have the funds to play community sports or join a sports team.

The star-studded event at the Premiere Ballroom and Convention Centre, Richmond Hill (9019 Leslie Street, north of Hwy 7) features entertainers Jim Witter and the Piano Men and Danny Diaz. Celebrity supporters include Tracy Wilson, Olympic medallist and TV sports analyst and George Chuvalo, former heavy weight boxing champion, among others.

Since 1999, the S'port for Kids Foundation has assisted more than 3,500 needy children through its S'port Grants. This year, SFK created a new national program – ***The S'port for Kids Play Fund*** – in partnership with the Children's Aid Foundation to make it possible for youth in foster care to move from the sidelines to centre field and live their sports dreams. There are approximately 66, 000 children in foster care who don't have the financial means to take part in organized sports.

The 2003 S'port Grant recipients are - Pathways Drop-In Centre in York Region, Children's Aid Foundation, ASSIST Community Services in Edmonton, Alberta, Toronto City Mission, Yonge Street Mission and Regent Park Community Centre, Toronto and Zardasht Oqab, aged 16, a three-time Ontario wrestling champion with Olympic ambition.

“Our goal is to give children with the greatest need a chance to have fun, as well as support their physical, social and emotional growth,” said Alex Yuan, president and founder of the SFK Foundation. “Sport inspires children to strive to achieve their full potential and our country’s future is directly tied to the abilities we nurture in our youth.”

The S’port for Kids Foundation was founded in 1997 in response to sweeping government cutbacks that resulted in the reduction or elimination of a number of community sports organizations and activities. The Foundation has filled this gap, in part, by supporting community sports and creating new after-school programs for youth, especially those at risk of being coerced into street gangs and criminal activities due to poverty, emotional and substance abuse issues.

S’port for Kids is a national registered charity that promotes the personal growth and well-being of youth through sport. As part of its mandate, the Foundation has a goal to help needy immigrants integrate into Canadian life through sports and a further commitment to assist Canada’s promising young athletes. The Foundation is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors and representing a cross-section of business and community leaders in the GTA. It allocates 100 per cent of its net proceeds to programs for deserving youth. The S’port Grants are awarded to organizations that make formal application to the Foundation and satisfy the granting criteria.

The 2003 S’port Ball sponsors include Rogers Television, Hillcrest Mall, Scotia Private Client Group, Allstate Insurance, A&L Computer Software Limited and CIBC.

Location:
Premier Ballroom and Convention Centre
9019 Leslie Street (East side)
2 blocks North of Hwy 7, West of Don Valley

Fact Sheet attached

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Fact Sheet

2003 S'port Grant Recipients

Children's Aid Foundation

The 2003 S'port Grant will lead to a new partnership and the creation of a national program – **The S'port for Kids Play Fund**. Utilizing the Children's Aid Foundation network, S'port for Kids will provide financial resources to help an increasing number of high-risk youth in foster care. In Canada, there are approximately 300,000 children in need of child welfare services and of these, 66,000 children are removed from their families into foster homes or group homes. Due to a lack of funds, these disadvantaged children are unable to take part in organized sports activities.

Pathways – for Children, Youth and Families – York Region

Pathways operates two residences in York Region for youth (aged 14-19) who are unable to reside at home because of emotional neglect or family crises and "Home Base" – a Drop in Centre in Richmond Hill for homeless youth (aged 13-21), who are in crisis and trying to rebuild their lives. The Centre provides essential support services for 400 individual youth who make 4,600 visits annually.

The S'port Grant will be used to purchase sports equipment for an enhanced recreational program that includes basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, soccer, ping-pong, badminton and other programs. The sports activities provide positive benefits related to psychological health, physical health, peer influence, academic performance and other lifestyle behaviours.

Zardasht Oqab

As part of its mandate, S'port for Kids has a goal to help new, under-privileged immigrants integrate into Canadian life and a further commitment to assist Canada's promising young athletes. Zardasht Oqab meets those criteria. At 16, he is an exemplary student, three-time Ontario Championship qualifier in wrestling, and winner of the Ontario age group championship, which allowed him to qualify to compete in the Canadian Wrestling Championships on April 4-6 in Calgary, Alberta. His overall wrestling record this year is 39-1.

A native of Afghanistan, he immigrated with his family to Canada five years ago and faced serious financial constraints in moving up in his sports career. The S'port Grant provided travel and tournament expenses to assist Zardasht compete in the Canadian Wrestling Championship and reach the next competitive level in possibly representing Canada as an elite athlete. Go Zardasht!

ASSIST Community Services Centre, Edmonton Alberta

The S'port Grant will be directed toward a Children's Fitness Program - "Fit Now, Fit For Life", providing children in low income Asian families with enjoyable fitness activities. Coaches and physical education teachers will be invited to educate Asian families on the importance of active participation in sports. The ASSIST Community Services Centre is a non-profit organization that was established in 1977 to address the needs of the immigrant population in Edmonton, Alberta. The organization's mission is to enhance the lives of individuals and families through quality programs and services.

MULTI-YEAR S'PORT GRANTS

In 2002, the Foundation created three new sports programs and pledged a multi-year financial commitment to ensure children could play in safe, healthy environments and reach their full potential.

Toronto City Mission

The Toronto City Mission works with under-privileged children in the St. James Town and Malvern communities. The funds a new after school program in the Malvern community, an area where there is one of the highest percentages of mothers living under the poverty line. The basketball program provides a positive alternative to being left home alone or on the streets.

Yonge Street Mission

The Yonge Street Mission responds to over 12,500 individuals **monthly** for help and support. The community centre is the hub of the organization and is located on the borders of Cabbagetown, Regent Park and St. James Town.

Commencing 2002, the Foundation worked with YSM to create a formal after-school sports program that operates up to four days per week from 3 to 7 pm and allows an estimated 500 children to participate in gymnastics, soccer, floor hockey, karate and Tae Kwan Do. The sports program serves as a great attraction for children to visit the community centre, and also encourages academic group study and tutorial sessions.

Regent Park Community Centre

The Regent Park Community Centre has experienced great success in developing a hockey program in which approximately 150 children participate. Their house teams are proud city champions in three age categories. Due to limited financial resources, children depended on recycled equipment and some competed with missing safety equipment, such as neck guards.

S'port for Kids adopted the hockey program in 2002. The new program provides for continued participation, and introduces further opportunity for top players to play at a higher level, thereby moving beyond the house league, something that the community centre has tried to do for years. The S'ports Grant allows talented players an opportunity for continued improvement, and exposure to life beyond the community in which they reside.