

Sat, April 17, 2004

Champ's cause

GEORGE CHUVALO AND SOME OF TORONTO'S LESS FORTUNATE KIDS NEED YOUR HELP

By HIMANI EDIRIWEERA

GEORGE CHUVALO is doing it again -- in his endeavour to keep the fighting off the streets and in the ring, the former boxing champ has joined forces with S'port for Kids to promote sporting activities for less fortunate youth. Chuvalo, honorary chair of the S'port for Kids Ball, which will be held May 1 at the Premier Ballroom in Richmond Hill, is helping the organization raise \$100,000 to give needy youth an opportunity to play sports in a safe environment.

"I thought, holy mackerel, these guys are okay -- they're helping disadvantaged kids that don't have the opportunity to participate in sports," Chuvalo said. "They're filling that gap."

Since government cuts to recreation, thousands of youth in the GTA have been forced to the streets because they come from disadvantaged families that can't support a healthy lifestyle.

PUT HIM ON TRACK

"It's a group of people that are helping young people get on track, and off the streets -- there's a lot of camaraderie in sports and a healthy mind always leads to a healthy body," he said.

Participating in sports while growing up put him on track, Chuvalo said.

"Even when I went solo I was still a part of something and it made me feel good. Idle hands truly are the work of the devil," he said.

S'port for Kids has provided \$400,000 for community sport since 2000 and helped more than 4,700 youth ages six to 18. The gala on May 1 will raise funds for after-school initiatives in St. James Town, Regent Park and the Malvern Community -- pockets with high poverty and crime rates in the city.

"If children are involved in sport they're less apt to smoke, drink and do drugs," Chuvalo said. "It's not 100% but it stacks the odds in the kids' favour because they will have less of an opportunity to pick up bad habits. If you have any hopes of being a professional athlete, or to be a better athlete -- whatever your dreams or pursuits -- if you don't have dreams, you have nothing to work toward."

Call 905-886-4392 or go to www.sportforkids.ca.