



Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada
Clubs Garçons & Filles du Canada

MEDIA RELEASE

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada to champion child and youth issues at National Conference 2008 in Hamilton

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARKHAM, ON (April 30, 2008) Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGCC) is pleased to announce that it will hold its **National Conference 2008 – Champions: Out in Front for Children and Youth** at the Hamilton Convention Centre from May 21 to 24. Held every two years, this year's event will help staff and volunteers from more than 100 clubs across Canada expand their skills and knowledge as leading providers of community-based, after-school programs. Boys and Girls Clubs play an essential role in the healthy development of 200,000 Canadian children and youth annually.

Hosted by the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club and sponsored by Sears Canada, the conference will cover key issues affecting the health and well-being of young people including addressing youth violence and strengthening communities, child mental health, and building leadership skills and self-esteem in teens. The conference will include an impressive panel of keynote speakers and more than 40 workshops.

Keynote speakers at the event will include **Liz Murray**, who will share her remarkable story of growing up with two drug-addicted parents and being homeless at age 15. Her life story and how she overcame incredible odds to achieve her dreams was recounted in the made-for-TV movie *Homeless to Harvard*.

Peter Amponsah, an alumnus of the Boys and Girls Club of Albion, a former Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario Provincial Youth Council member and currently a BGCC National Board Member, will speak about violence in urban centres and the need to empower youth with the skills to solve problems peacefully and take an active role in planning safe communities for the future.

Child and adolescent psychiatrist **Dr. Jean Clinton**, an assistant clinical professor at McMaster University's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neuroscience, will discuss adolescent brain development and its implications for planning and programming for teens within the Boys and Girls Clubs in Canada.

Conference highlights will also include a town hall on community violence moderated by CBC journalist **Mark Kelley**. Panelists will include **Michael Chettleburgh**, a recognized Canadian street gang expert and author of *Young Thugs: Inside the Dangerous World of Canadian Street Gangs*, *The Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs*, and publisher and editor of *Lessons From a Gang Cop*.

Dr. Simon Davidson, a child adolescent and family psychiatrist and currently Chief of Psychiatry at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, will give the keynote address at the BGCC Annual General Meeting. He will focus on identifying and managing mental health problems in children and youth.

"This is an outstanding opportunity for delegates to learn and be inspired by our tremendous lineup of conference speakers and hands-on workshops, as well as share insights about the many critical issues facing young people across Canada," said Pam Jolliffe, President and CEO, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada.

"The Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club is delighted to host the National Conference 2008," said Heather Geddes, Chair. "We encourage everyone attending to take advantage of the many events we will be offering during the conference and to explore our wonderful city."

For a complete schedule of events on the **National Conference 2008 – Champions: Out in Front for Children and Youth**, visit the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada website at www.bgccan.com.

About Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is a leading, national provider of programs to children and youth that support the healthy physical, educational and social development of close to 200,000 young people and their families each year. In 700 community locations across Canada, clubs offer after-school programs in physical recreation, technology, the arts, literacy, personal growth and more. Many clubs also provide meals, emergency shelter, family support programs and other support to children, youth and families at risk. Boys and Girls Clubs have been helping young Canadians to discover, develop and achieve their potential for over 100 years. To learn more, visit www.bgccan.com.

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