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Media advisory / Photo opportunity

Toronto kids learn about human rights through play city-wide this summer

Summer day camps in Toronto and across the country are helping children to address bullying, discrimination and exclusion in their communities using Equitas' Play it Fair! program.

Toronto, August 1st: As summer camps are underway across Toronto, children from all parts of the city will be playing with a purpose. Sites operated by community groups, such as the Kiwanis program in Regent Park, and Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation city wide summer camps are part of over 150 locations in Toronto where children will be playing games from the Equitas *Play it Fair!* program all summer long.

Play it Fair! (implemented in Toronto since 2006) is an innovative program that equips day camp staff with the skills to lead children 6-12 through activities which promote respect, fairness, acceptance, responsibility and cooperation. Children play the games, discuss how they feel, and work together to change how they treat one another and those in their community. *Play it Fair!* developed by Equitas, is run in day camps and after-school programs offered by the City of Toronto and Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs, encouraging the healthy development of children and building stronger more inclusive communities.

In addition to summer long play, on **August 4, 11, 17**, over 500 children will participate in Toronto to celebrate ***International Youth Day / Play it Fair! Day***. Community-based activities to mark the event will take place in four corners of the City. On this day, children will play value-based games, and create post-cards and collective artwork illustrating what children's rights mean to them.

Thanks to the generous support from TD Bank Group, TELUS, and Community Foundations nationally, the *Play it Fair!* program is flourishing and connecting children and those who work with them in Toronto and 14 other communities from Vancouver to Newfoundland. An estimated 12,000 children will benefit from the program in Toronto and an estimated 70,000 nationwide in 2011-2012. It's estimated that nationally over 4500 children will participate in *Play it Fair! Day* on or around August 12th.

"The games and activities included in *Play it Fair!* instil important values and attitudes in children, who are learning and see this as another fun part of day camp," said Ian Hamilton, Executive Director of Equitas. "By encouraging respect and acceptance of differences, the *Play it Fair!* program is equipping children and youth to work together to solve conflicts and participate in the diverse communities in which they live."

"*Play it Fair!* has proven to be an invaluable resource to our children and staff," said Jessica Lawlor, program director of Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs. "As the largest employer of youth in the downtown east, our youth find that it not only helps them facilitate inclusive and innovative programming, but also impacts how they accept themselves and respect others in the community."

"*Play it Fair!* resources help us deliver high-quality community recreation programs to children and youth throughout the City." said Janie Romoff, Director of Community Recreation for the City of Toronto.

For more about this program visit the Children and Youth Programs section of the Equitas website: www.equitas.org

To view an electronic copy of the *Play it Fair!* toolkit, please visit:
<http://equitas.org/en/what-we-do/children-and-youth/play-it-fair-canada/toolkit-download/>

About Equitas

Established in 1967, Equitas-International Centre for Human Rights Education is a non-profit organization that uses education to advance equality, social justice and respect for human dignity. Equitas' Canadian Program focuses on knowledge-building, leadership training and participatory education projects for children and youth that promote inclusion, respect for diversity, peaceful conflict resolution and community engagement.

On the Web: www.equitas.org

About Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club

Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs (TKBGC) is a non-profit community services agency that provides low cost programs for 1,100 children and youth living in the Regent Park and Trinity Bellwoods communities. TKBGC is a leader in providing quality after-school programs that support the healthy physical, educational and social development of 'at-risk' children and youth. These programs help develop positive relationships; refine social skills; build self-esteem; and provide access to technology, homework assistance and nutrition. TKBGC is committed to developing leadership roles for youth in the communities it serves and is the largest employer of youth in Toronto's downtown east.

To learn more about Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs please visit www.believeinkids.ca.

City of Toronto

<http://www.toronto.ca/parks>

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