

**For Immediate Release**

## **Children's mental health key factor for success in sport and recreation**

**Toronto, May 8, 2008** - HIGH FIVE® National, a division of Parks and Recreation Ontario, is leading the pack to ensure that strong mental health is a principle factor within children's sport and recreation programs.

**"Parents are increasingly aware of the role that mental health plays within every aspect of their child's development and of the opportunities that exist within sports and recreation to positively impact, strengthen and shape their child's character and abilities. They're seeking out organizations that recognize this."**  
- LJ Bartle, HIGH FIVE® National Manager

HIGH FIVE® training ensures children's programs offer the highest quality mental, social and physical skill sets and life experiences. It provides instructors, coaches and leaders working with children aged 6 to 12 with the expertise in learning patterns, physical and social stressors as well as developmental needs.

Hundreds of organizations across Canada implement HIGH FIVE® training in the Principles of Healthy Child Development. One organization is Futures Gymnastics, whose President, Lorraine Currie, believes that the HIGH FIVE® training her staff receives is a key component in providing top quality experiences as part of their athletic programs.

**"All our staff feel more prepared to work with children and their individual needs. Through HIGH FIVE®, we have been able to make a positive difference in their lives which shows through their increased self-esteem and how they deal with issues."**  
- Lorraine Currie, President of Futures Gymnastics

Maya is a 7-year old girl with Tourette's Syndrome who participates in one of Ms Currie's classes. Maya's mother, Ingrid Smith, is impressed with Futures' child-centred approach.

**"Her disability is a behavioral ability and mental health issue. Building her self-esteem now is crucial for her development – it's the foundation of her character. The staff are well equipped to handle such a challenge. These staff never push and are always encouraging. When she got to a point where her disability made gymnastics especially difficult, the staff were completely adaptable."** - Ingrid Smith

HIGH FIVE® training, tools, resources and Accreditation process help many organizations across the country deliver positive child-centred programs. Implementing HIGH FIVE training and embedding its key ingredients into an organization's operating practices demonstrates a commitment to children's physical and mental health.

### **BACKGROUND**



HIGH FIVE® is a national quality standard of Parks and Recreation Ontario for children's sport and recreation. HIGH FIVE® is committed to assisting children along the path of healthy child development by:

- ensuring that recreation and sport practitioners develop a high level of knowledge and expertise in child development;
- helping parents to make informed choices; and
- providing practitioners with the tools for enhancing and maintaining a high level of program quality.

Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) is an all-inclusive member-based association dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the people in Ontario.

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