



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**TORONTO, ON**

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### **BLUE JAYS KICK-OFF WEEKEND WITH VISIT TO MONTREAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

#### **Rehab Gym at Hospital built courtesy of \$250,000 investment from Jays Care Foundation**

On **Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**, the **TORONTO BLUE JAYS** began their weekend in Montreal with a visit to the Montreal Children's Hospital. In the lead up to the annual Spring Training series at Olympic Stadium, the club celebrated the opening of the Rehab Gym at the hospital, made possible by a \$250,000 investment from Jays Care Foundation.

The newly minted "Jays Care Rehab Gym," located on the 8th Floor of Block B of the new hospital, offers in-patients an area to exercise and receive early rehabilitation from a team of specialists. Featuring an inspirational Blue Jays themed wall, it is an environment of healing and recovery, in which sick children can undergo procedures and treatment and achieve their true potential.

"The team at Montreal Children's Hospital is there for children whose resiliency is tested every day," said Robert Witchel, Executive Director, Jays Care Foundation. "The Toronto Blue Jays are extremely proud to contribute to the care of those that come to this inspirational facility and we look forward to hearing their stories of success as we go 'Beyond The Ballpark' for children and youth across Canada."

The sentiment was echoed by Blue Jays President & CEO Mark Shapiro, who was making his first visit to the facility.

"To see the excitement here in Montreal surrounding the Blue Jays and our team's presence in the Jays Care Rehab Gym is truly inspiring," said Mark Shapiro, President & CEO, Toronto Blue Jays. "Jays Care Foundation works tirelessly in communities across the country and positively impacted over 62,000 children across Canada in 2015. I am proud to help celebrate our investment in this remarkable facility."

Having grown in popularity in Quebec since the departure of the Expos in 2004, an investment from the Blue Jays heightened the level of excitement for the hospital's new facility, which opened in 2015.

“Rarely do we see a sports club from another city come to the Montreal Children’s asking how they can help. This is precisely what Jays Care Foundation did,” says the President of the Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation, Marie-Josée Gariépy. “In 2012, they arrived at the Children’s with a ten thousand dollar gift for a much needed piece of equipment. And since, they have made this amazing gift that will serve a countless number of sick children of our community. We can’t be thankful enough for their commitment towards these children.”

Following the ceremony, Blue Jays alumni and front office staff visited with patients currently receiving treatment at the hospital.

“Early rehabilitation is key to a child’s positive outcome and has an important impact on both their physical and psychological well-being,” says Debbie Friedman, Director of Trauma and Director of the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program at the Children’s, adding that, “Seeing improvements early on in the recovery process provide children and families with hope and encouragement. In this center, children can begin the recovery process following surgery for a brain tumor, or after sustaining a traumatic injury. It is also an ideal setting for burn trauma rehabilitation, assessing a baby with delayed development, and increasing endurance in children recovering from cardiac surgery or following a flare up of a respiratory condition like Cystic Fibrosis.”

In 2016, Jays Care will invest over \$4 million across Canada in programs and projects in support of children and youth.