

# Jays Care Foundation issues grants



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Each group was represented in a ceremony before Monday's game. (John Matthew IV/MLB.com)

TORONTO -- The Blue Jays don't just hope to make an impact in the American League East standings. They also hope to make an impact in the Toronto community for years to come.

The Jays Care Foundation recently announced grants to 13 local charities and programs devoted to improving the lives of children. The Foundation is donating a total of \$116,500 to these groups, with each grant ranging between \$2,500 and \$25,000.

Each of the 13 groups was represented in a ceremony before Monday's game against the Red Sox. In addition, the ceremonial first pitch was thrown by 8-year-old Travis Carter, a Toronto native who suffers from a rare neurological disorder known as Batten's Disease. Carter is the inspiration for Travis' Battle, a foundation started by his parents aimed at raising funds to research and eventually cure Batten's Disease at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

In addition to Travis' Battle, the Jays Care Foundation awarded grants to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto, the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre, Cornwall Youth Centre Inc., The Gatehouse, the Gloucester Recreation Development Organization, Humewood House Association, the J.D. Griffin Adolescent Centre, ProAction Cops & Kids, Raising the Roof and Serve Canada.

Rob Godfrey, advisor to the Jays Care Foundation Board of Directors and the Blue Jays' senior vice president of communications and external relations, said that the Board of Directors goes through a rigorous process to determine each year's grant recipients.

"[The Board] is all volunteers, and it's made up of a couple of people from the Blue Jays, but mostly business leaders from across the community," Godfrey said. "Those business leaders have donated their time to pore over each of these grant applications and decide which are the 'most' worthy. I stress the 'most' worthy, since every application we receive is from a great organization. We take a look at the ones that most fit with our mandate of helping kids and promoting good activities."

Janet Hardy is the executive director of The Gatehouse, a Toronto-based advocacy center that investigates cases of child abuse and helps both children and adults who have suffered the trauma of abuse. She said that the Jays Care Foundation's grant is going toward her organization's Response to a Family Crisis program.

"It's a support program for children coming in for child abuse investigation," Hardy said. "We surround them with support advocacy. The environment we have is an old Victorian home, so they're comfortable. Anything that goes into the investigation process, that's the Response to a Family Crisis program."

"We have a very diverse fund-raising program, and we need grants from communities and corporate foundations to keep going. Whether it's a dollar or \$20,000, we take every dollar we get very seriously."

Since its inception in 1992, the Jays Care Foundation has donated more than \$1 million in grants and operated a series of events and activities in support of children's organizations and charities. Two of the Foundation's major ongoing projects are the Field of Dreams project, through which the Foundation and the City of Toronto combine their efforts to refurbish baseball and softball fields in the Greater Toronto Area, and the Rookie League, a summer baseball camp for children from Toronto community housing.

This is the first round of grants that the Jays Care Foundation will issue in 2006, as another group of organizations will be awarded in September.

**Simon Sodhi, of the J.D. Griffin Adolescent Centre, said that grants from such organizations as the Jays Care Foundation are critical to his programs for adults and children who have developmental delays.**

**"They provide us with funds that allow us to provide a summer job skills-training program for at-risk youth," said Sodhi. "Without them, we wouldn't be able to run these programs, so I think it's a great beneficial foundation."**

*This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.*