

## **Teen Girls and Volunteer Role Models Run 5K/10K as Part of Innovative Mentoring Program**

*JLT Kickstart for Health inspires Toronto youth to fight obesity and make healthy lifestyle choices through goal-setting and adult mentoring*

March 27, 2009 – Hamilton, ON – As the starter's gun goes off this Sunday at Hamilton's Around the Bay Race, it will signal the beginning of a major milestone for a group of young women from St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club in Toronto. These teenagers spent the last three months training for a five or ten kilometer run as part of a program dedicated to encouraging healthy lifestyles and fighting obesity among Toronto youth.

**The Running Program**, which is in its second year, is part of Junior League of Toronto Kickstart for Health, a larger initiative founded by the **Junior League of Toronto**, a non-profit volunteer organization of women committed to improving the community. As part of the running program, Junior League volunteers met weekly with the girls and a professional coach to train through the ice and snow, act as role models and provide inspiration. To compliment the training program, the group also participated in workshops on subjects such as nutrition and injury prevention.

"Perhaps more than ever, the future of Canadian children is being threatened by the growing trend of obesity and declining health. In fact, estimates show that between 1981 and 1996 the number of obese pre-teen children in Canada tripled," said Kelly Koselek, President of the Junior League of Toronto, and current Running Buddy in the program. "Research shows the problem is even more pronounced among underprivileged children and teens – and this is where we feel our JLT Kickstart for Health programs can make the greatest difference."

The success of the program this year and the feedback from the girls speaks for itself. "Even when it snows....we run. We are committed to our 10 km goal, and each training day I not only get to run, but hang out with my friends and get a sense of my personal accomplishment. I am doing it for my health - ...one run at a time." Stefanie Singh, St.. Alban's Running Program participant.

In addition to the Running Program, the JLT Kickstart for Health program delivers JLT Kickstart Healthy Living Workshops. This series of workshops are presented to the Girls On The Move group at the St. Alban's Boys' & Girls' Club. From body image issues to smart food choices and fun fitness activities, these evening sessions are designed to help nurture healthy lifestyle choices among 20 pre-teen girls. To learn more about JLT Kickstart for Health, visit our website at [www.jltkickstart.com](http://www.jltkickstart.com).

### **About The Junior League of Toronto (JLT)**

Since 1926, the Junior League of Toronto has made a positive impact on the quality of life for thousands of Greater Toronto Area residents. The JLT mission challenges its members to improve the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. By contributing millions of volunteer hours and more than \$4 million of monetary support to more than 400 community programs & projects, the JLT takes a hands-on approach to help community organizations move forward.

The JLT Community work has been made possible by the funds raised from our Designer Showhouses. Visit [www.jltshowhouse.org](http://www.jltshowhouse.org) to get the details on our Showhouse from May 8-31st at McLean House.

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