

# community action grant



April 8, 2016

## **MLSE FOUNDATION AWARDS \$50,000 TORONTO RAPTORS COMMUNITY ACTION GRANT PRESENTED BY JUST ENERGY FOUNDATION TO LADY BALLERS CAMP**

On Friday evening, MLSE Foundation announced Lady Ballers Camp as this year's recipient of the *Toronto Raptors Community Action Grant presented by the Just Energy Foundation* at Air Canada Centre. MLSE Foundation representatives were joined by Just Energy Vice President of Marketing Alan Shulman and youth from the Lady Ballers Camp organization for the announcement. The \$50,000 grant will directly support *Dunk Like a Girl*, which provides girls with basketball skill development as well as nutrition and leadership training.

"Lady Ballers Camp is the perfect example of an organization making a positive impact on the health and confidence of young females through basketball," said Michael Bartlett, Executive Director, MLSE Foundation. "We are passionate about growing sport in local communities across Ontario. Thanks to our partnership with the Just Energy Foundation, we are able to provide this organization with \$50,000 to expand their all-encompassing program in the Brampton Area."

*Dunk Like a Girl* is a basketball, nutrition and leadership initiative for girls between the ages of six and 16 living in low-income, marginalized communities. By including coaching training in the programming, *Dunk Like a Girl* provides youth with tools to become community leaders and create positive change. Participants will have access to high-level basketball training to develop and improve their physical and intellectual skills in a safe, inclusive environment. In addition, through a partnership with FoodShare, *Dunk Like a Girl* will include a healthy nutrition component where participants will be provided access to a certified nutritionist. Finally, as part of the Lady Ballers Camp's dedication to education, participants will partake in weekly workshops addressing issues of concern including: gender stereotyping, sexism, healthy body image and racism.

"*Dunk like a Girl* was initially geared towards promoting women in sports and celebrating their accomplishments," said Abi Ajibolade, Executive Director, Lady Ballers Camp. "The name of the program itself was a way to break down the stereotype of inferiority when referencing female athletes and reclaim the phrase 'like a girl' to become a term of endearment. We want girls to be confident in themselves and their abilities even while participating in sports and activities that are often male-dominated. With this generous grant, Lady Ballers Camp will be able to reach out to more girls from marginalized communities and extend the program to year-round."

*Dunk Like a Girl* began as a week-long program in March of 2013 in celebration of International Women's Day. Due to its success, Lady Ballers Camp has extended *Dunk Like a Girl* into a year-long program. Lady Ballers Camp is founded on the premise of providing excellent, enriching programs at little to no cost. The \$50,000 grant

allows *Dunk Like a Girl* to operate with no registration fee. Each session of the program will serve approximately 40 girls, totaling 80 girls per year and 160 over the partnership with MLSE Foundation and the Just Energy Foundation.

“There is tremendous value in supporting youth sports as a measure to promote confidence, purpose and learning” says Deb Merrill, Just Energy’s co-Chief Executive Officer. “With this latest Community Action Grant, we are delighted to support the great work of the Lady Ballers Club and their *Dunk Like a Girl* initiative that seeks to mentor young girls on important issues of gender stereotypes, body image, nutrition and more, within a welcoming sports environment. Investment in our youth today is an investment in our leaders and game-changers of tomorrow.”

*The Toronto Raptors, Toronto FC and Toronto Maple Leafs Community Action Grants* are three \$50,000 sport-specific grants presented by the Just Energy Foundation that MLSE Foundation will award to charitable organizations supporting youth sports programming each year. In addition to team-related grants, MLSE Foundation will award a \$50,000 grant that is not sport-specific to a selected charitable organization. Eligible organizations can apply for all grants at [mlsefoundation.org](http://mlsefoundation.org), where submissions are reviewed by a selection committee before a winner is chosen and announced at a special event in their community.

### **About Lady Ballers Camp**

Lady Ballers Camp is a not-for-profit charitable organization that integrates basketball fundamentals to encourage positive growth and self-confidence in girls and young women. In our commitment to social change, our mission is to create equitable access to recreational basketball, leadership, and food security programs to all, regardless of their socio-economic background. We utilize the essential themes of basketball, which promote teamwork, positivity and co-operation to establish a safe, non-judgmental environment conducive to improving both the physical as well as mental development of young women. Our passion is, helping girls to become healthy and active through an enjoyable experience of playing basketball, learning to make healthy meals & snacks, having tools to build and maintain her self-esteem, maintaining healthy & realistic body image, gaining and maintaining leadership skills and of course, experiencing traditional camp programs like Arts and Crafts. Lady Ballers Camp is a safe place for girls to make friends, keep fit and have fun. For more information visit [ladyballerscamp.org](http://ladyballerscamp.org)

### **About MLSE Foundation**

MLSE Foundation believes all kids should have access to sport and the opportunity to develop lasting dreams on the playing field. With the support of MLSE’s teams, the Foundation funds the refurbishment of local athletic facilities and programs that support kids through sports and recreation. Since launching in December 2009, the MLSE Foundation has invested more than \$19 million into our community. For more information visit [mlsefoundation.org](http://mlsefoundation.org), or follow @MLSEFoundation

### **About Just Energy Foundation**

The Just Energy Foundation was established in 2013 by Just Energy Group Inc. to help registered Canadian and U.S. charitable organizations secure the resources required to promote the health and well-being of communities in need. Funded entirely by Just Energy, the Foundation invests in local programs that work to enhance the quality of life in Just Energy’s operating markets towards building stronger and supportive communities. Visit [justenergyfoundation.com](http://justenergyfoundation.com) to learn more.

-30-

### **Media contacts:**

Melissa Perri, MLSE, 416-815-5524, [melissa.perri@mlse.com](mailto:melissa.perri@mlse.com)

Nancy Donnaperna, Just Energy Foundation, 905-670-4440, [ndonnaperna@justenergy.com](mailto:ndonnaperna@justenergy.com)