November 11, 2006

Dear Mayor Katz and members of the Executive Policy Committee,

I am writing you because of what has been going on at the Kelvin Community Center. I have been fortunate enough to have significant experience working with children in the Elmwood and surrounding areas. I have introduced the sport of Olympic wrestling through many of the schools and community clubs and have some first hand experience with that particular community club. I have received awards from the Minister of Justice for my work in urban sports programs and I have received literally dozens of letters of appreciation from teachers and community program coordinators for the work that I have done. I do not mention these things to impress you; rather I want to impress upon you how I have been able to see first hand the impact of sport and community activities on the lives of children. Whether it is a pathway to academic success or a means of avoiding the lure and temptation of drugs and crime, I have consistently seen how sports have been able to benefit the lives of the next generation. For some that I have been able to work with, sports have meant the difference between a life of crime and staying and school. On the end of the spectrum the introduction of sport through the community clubs have meant international competitive success and full athletic scholarships. Just half a block away from the Kelvin community center is the home of Meghan King who was exposed to wrestling right there in her community. She continues to enjoy success in her sport and has gone on to receive full athletic scholarships. I could spend half a page describing her successes that have resulted from her being exposed to wrestling right there in her community, but instead I want to emphasize one interesting fact. Her first job was at the Kelvin Community Center. What a tremendous thing it is was to see Meghan leave from an early morning practice and then go to the Kelvin Community Center to work with children and impart the same skills and values that sport had given her. It is a phenomenon that I have seen over and over again. People that have benefited from programs in their community are often seen actively giving back to those same kinds of programs.

Although much can, and has, been said on the social values of sports I want to impart one very point that I believe should be forefront of any Kelvin discussion. I firmly believe that if you want to affect children, **you must control the point of contact**. As a general rule, it is not the children who will first seek you out. You have to bring yourself to the community. We all know that there are very involved parents who will make the phone calls to find out what's available, or transport their children to "wherever" so that they can be involved in programs; but it is not those families that I am talking about. I am talking about the single mom who doesn't get home till 6pm and is struggling to make ends meat for her family. I am talking about the working class family whose parents don't call around to inquire about "what's out there" for their children because they don't speak very good English and who don't have a vehicle to transport their children to the various activities. There are an unlimited number of scenarios like this that characterize the families of Elmwood. This letter is not meant to be a socio-economic discussion, but it is clear that Elmwood is very different than Tuxedo, Southdale, or River Heights. We need to be much more vigilant in bringing the programs

to the doorsteps of the community. To summarize into one sentence, "ACCESSIBLITY, ACCESSIBLITY, ACCESSIBLITY".

I recently had a discussion with an athlete that I coach who is now herself coaching children in the East Kildonan area. She described how her father, The Honourable Member of Parliament Bill Blaikie, attended an event at Kelvin Community Center in which nearly five hundred community residents came together in a gathering intended to help save the community center. We were so impressed with the outpouring of community spirit that Tessa Blaikie and I have decided to offer a wrestling program at the Kelvin Community Center. I recently purchased a wrestling mat and I will provide this mat (approximately $12,000 for a new wrestling mat) to the Kelvin Community Center at no charge for use in a wrestling program. Tessa said that she would be interested in giving back to the sport and the community that has given her so much. She has agreed to coach a wrestling program at the Kelvin Community Center. We would ask that you respect the wishes of the Elmwood community that has overwhelmingly demonstrated their desire to save the Kelvin Community Center.

I am attaching several newspaper articles that highlight how sport impacts lives, including my own.

Sincerely,

Cory Coles

Cory Coles