

# Celebrity youth join festivities to raise research dollars

They may bask in Hollywood glitz, but offer these young stars of stage and screen a chance to help others and they are there in an instant.

With this year's Polo for Heart fundraising efforts dedicated to pediatric heart disease research, a group of caring young Hollywood celebrities will once again be on hand to help make an impact. Among them will be Chioke Dmachi of the hit TV show CSI: Miami, Haylie Duff of Napoleon Dynamite, Lauren Summers of The Bernie Mac Show, Scout Taylor-Compton of the movie Sleepover, Michael Welch of Joan of Arcadia, and Chris Winsor, Broadway star of Les Misérables.

They will be joined by a group of like-minded philanthropic Toronto teens to meet and greet guests at all of the Polo for Heart activities. They will oversee games at the Kids Village and be on hand for the pre-event Junior Black & White Ball June 22, where they will present guests arriving by horse-drawn carriage with white carnations and escort them to the dinner tent.

"These are the most incredible children and teens you will ever come across," says Linda Finnegan, founder of the Los Angeles-based organization Kids With A Cause Inc. (KWAC) to which these actors, singers and regular kids have lent their support.

Ms Finnegan, a Los Angeles native with a background in child psychology and child development, set up Kids With A Cause Inc. in 1999 after coming across a number of young stars who wanted to give back to their community and help kids at the same time.

Her goal was to teach children to reach out to other children of the world who, through no fault of their own, suffer from poverty, hunger, sickness, lack of education, abandonment, neglect or abuse.

The response was so overwhelming — from both the public and young celebrities alike — Kids With A Cause has supported more than 220 events over the past five years. The roster includes 50 celebrity youth members in the United States and 18 students in Canada, all aged six to 20.

The Canadian office in Toronto opened in late 2003 following a highly successful benefit hosted by actor and key KWAC supporter Hilary Duff. A European KWAC office is set to open later this year. Ms Finnegan is in the midst of applying for non governmental organization (NGO) status at the United Nations, enabling youth to help youth internationally.

To date, the Canadian office has worked with children at a host of Ontario-based organizations including the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre, the Hospital for Sick Children and the Ontario Track 3 Ski Association. Youth members have also visited

orphanages and homeless shelters.

Polo for Heart, though, is a particularly thrilling experience.

"Anything we can do that will either prevent heart disease or illness or that can help

to ensure this type of research for the future gives us a great opportunity to do our part and help children who need us," says Ms Finnegan.

If you are interested in purchasing tickets for the Junior Black & White Ball, hosted by Kids With A Cause, or want to learn more about the organization please visit the website at [www.kidswithacause.org](http://www.kidswithacause.org).



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