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BLUE JAYS ANNOUNCE \$7.5 MILLION COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Investment in Jays Care programs will support families in underserved communities as part of organization's commitment to a more equitable Canada



For more than two decades, the **Blue Jays** and **Jays Care** have worked to create a level playing field for children and youth across Canada. Today, the club and foundation announce a \$7.5 million commitment in 2020 to support Canadian families in underserved communities.

Though COVID-19 has impacted all Canadians, the pandemic has disproportionately affected those already facing significant barriers in their everyday lives. The pandemic has exacerbated pervasive social issues for communities with greater concentrations of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) individuals, and caused additional strain for families of children living with disabilities. This is the time our communities need our help the most and the Blue Jays are committed to meaningful action to support a more just and equitable Canada.

The **Blue Jays Community Commitment** will benefit four key areas:

- **Virtual Programming:** Enabling virtual programming for thousands of kids in partnership with Toronto Community Housing, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, and Indigenous communities across the country, designed to keep children and youth active and building life skills, when so many other programs have been forced to cancel.
 - Virtual Summer Camp with Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
 - Virtual Toronto Community Housing Rookie League
 - Virtual Indigenous Rookie League

- **Providing Meals:** Supporting food security for families living in Toronto Community Housing and the temporary transformation of Rogers Centre as a food distribution site to pack and ship millions of meals to food banks across the country.
- **Adaptive Home Baseball Kits:** Distributing more than 1,000 adaptive home baseball kits to help kids enrolled in Challenger Baseball stay active this summer and fill gaps in regular programming for the families of kids living with disabilities.
- **Building Baseball Infrastructure:** Investing \$1.1 million to build or refurbish 13 baseball diamonds in communities across the country. Construction will adhere to applicable guidelines set out by local health authorities and these diamonds will provide spaces for communities to reconnect once it is deemed safe to do so.

“The Blue Jays live by a simple motto: get better every day. This phrase describes not only our collective pursuit to bring World Series Championships back to Canada, but also connects our efforts outside of baseball, to the impact we can make as a trusted community partner,” said **Mark Shapiro, President & CEO, Toronto Blue Jays**. “Sports provides a tremendous leadership opportunity and we feel the responsibility to use our platform for positive change. Together with Jays Care Foundation, we remain committed to breaking down barriers for the most vulnerable Canadians as we strive towards a more equitable society for all.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck and communities locked down, Jays Care staff contacted the families of more than 600 children in its programs to learn about the challenges they were facing. Informed by this feedback, the foundation’s programs have been fundamentally and ambitiously adapted to meet the unique needs of families in communities across Canada in 2020.

“As we listened to families across Canada, it was instantly clear that COVID-19 was not impacting all Canadian communities equally,” said **Robert Witchel, Executive Director, Jays Care Foundation**. “Over the course of a regular year, Jays Care provides programming for 35,000 Canadian children and youth. Our team has taken an innovative and creative approach to adapting our programs so that we can continue to make a positive impact on children and youth in underserved communities because they need our support now more than ever.”

As part of today’s announcement, the Blue Jays and Jays Care will launch the **#BlueJaysCommunity** hashtag. Over the coming months, this hashtag will be used to share stories, amplify voices, and show the impact of this work across Canada.

Please find the **Blue Jays Community Commitment launch video**, featuring Canadian families, Blue Jays alumni, coaches, and Front Office staff, available for download and media use [here](#).

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