

FOR RELEASE

**CANUCKS, LIONS, WHITECAPS AND CANADIANS TO WELCOME HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AT ANNUAL SPORTS DAY**



**Vancouver, BC** - On Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, players, alumni and mascots from the Vancouver Canucks, BC Lions, Vancouver Whitecaps FC, and Vancouver Canadians will unite at BC Place for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Canucks Autism Network (CAN) Sports Day, sponsored by Tim Hortons.

Hosted by CAN, the event welcomes 300 children and youth with autism, as well as their siblings, for an unforgettable multisport experience. Rotating through four stations on the BC Place field, participants will have the unique opportunity to play ball hockey, football, soccer and baseball with their sports heroes.

Founded by Vancouver Canucks Co-owners Paolo and Clara Aquilini in 2008, CAN is also celebrating the organization's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. With CAN Sports Day in its sixth year, it remains the only event in which all four major professional sports teams in Vancouver have collaborated for a common cause. Athletes will include:

- **Jake Virtanen and Derrick Pouliot** - Vancouver Canucks players
- **Carl Valentine** – Vancouver Whitecaps FC alumnus
- **Brett Levis and Jake Nerwinski** - Vancouver Whitecaps FC players
- **Matt Bucknor, Tyler Davis and Dyshawn Davis** - BC Lions players



**Vancouver Canucks President of Hockey Operations, Trevor Linden**, is a strong believer in the benefits of sports and physical activities for children and youth. “CAN Sports Day is a fun and important event,” said Linden. “Every year, our organization looks forward to sharing our love of sport with these kids and their families. The confidence they gain is meaningful because they can apply it not only to their sporting activities, but also to the challenges of everyday life.”

“Vancouver Whitecaps FC are proud to be a part of CAN Sports Day for the sixth consecutive year,” said **Whitecaps FC President Bob Lenarduzzi**. “This unique event brings together Vancouver’s professional sports teams for a worthwhile cause, while promoting healthy lifestyles and bringing joy to these very deserving families.”

“The BC Lions Football Club is honoured and excited to once again participate in CAN Sports Day,” said **BC Lions VP of Football Operations and Head Coach Wally Buono**. “Now in its sixth year, this highly-anticipated annual event continues to provide families affected by autism with a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

“To see the tangible and immediate impact that Canucks Autism Network (CAN) is having on our community is both inspiring and purposeful,” says **Andy Dunn, Partner & President, Vancouver Canadians**. “The Vancouver Canadians and Vancouver Canadians Baseball Foundation are humbled to put our full resources behind this community-inspired initiative. To assist in the support and development of these local families is something we cherish whole-heartedly.”

“CAN is incredibly proud of the partnerships that we have fostered with all four professional sports teams in order to continue offering this event,” says **Katy Harandi, President and CEO, Canucks Autism Network**. “As we celebrate the organization’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we look forward to continued collaboration with organizations that share our passion for supporting individuals and families with autism across BC.”

**Media are invited to attend between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm and are asked to enter through the East Gate entrance. Opening ceremonies will take place at 1:00 pm followed by a group photo prior to the start of the activities. Players and families will be available for interviews between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm.**

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#### **ABOUT CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK (CAN)**

Canucks Autism Network (CAN) provides year-round sports and recreation programs for individuals and families living with autism, while increasing awareness and providing training in communities across British Columbia.

#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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