



FREE THE CHILDREN

children helping children through education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Craig Kielburger, Canadian child rights activist, nominated for international
“Children’s Nobel Prize”**

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Toronto, Jan. 16, 2006 – Craig Kielburger, international child rights activist and founder of Free The Children, has been nominated for the 2006 World Children Prize for the Rights of the Child (WCPRC). Commonly referred to as the “Children’s Nobel Prize,” the WCPRC annually selects three finalists for their outstanding contributions to the defense of children’s rights. The nominations were announced Jan. 16.

Past recipients of the award include Nelson Mandela, Carol Bellamy, former executive director of Unicef, Olara Otunnu, former UN Under Secretary-General, and Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Stiglitz.

The nomination is conferred in recognition of Kielburger’s leadership and development efforts through his youth-driven charity, Free The Children, which works to free children from poverty and exploitation by creating accessible education opportunities. Kielburger founded Free The Children in 1995 when he was 12-years-old. Since then, through the voices and actions of young people, the dynamic organization has developed into a youth movement that spans the globe and has built over 425 schools in 23 different countries, providing education to 35,000 children everyday.

Other finalists for the WCPRC include Jetsum Pema, the Dalai Lama’s sister and Rwanda Orphans Organization, aiding children orphaned during the country’s civil war in 1994. “It is such an extraordinary honour to have been nominated alongside individuals with such talent and leadership” said Kielburger. “The nomination is a testament to the efforts and dedication of youth in Free The Children Youth in Action Groups who are standing up for their peers, taking action through schoolbuilding projects and are raising awareness about the social issues that continue to affect millions of children around the world.”

Established by the Swedish Children's World Association in 2000, the WCPRC is currently the world's largest annual education program about children's rights. Over 12,000 schools with eight million students in 80 countries are registered by WCPRC as *Global Friend* schools. These students are entitled to vote in the election to decide who will be the recipient of the *Global Friends' Award*. An international child jury, consisting of former child soldiers, slaves, refugees and street children, will decide on the winner of the *World's Children's Prize* on April 18, 2006.

The award also bears a subtitle, The Iqbal Masih Award for the Rights of the Child, in tribute to first World Children's Prize award recipient, Iqbal Masih, awarded posthumously for this fight against child labour. It was an article in a local paper detailing Iqbal's heroic tale and his tragic death that first inspired and has continued to inspire Kielburger to take a stand for the rights of children, leading to the founding of Free The Children.

"To be considered for an award that was first received by the very same person who inspired me, and the movement that has become Free The Children, is an indescribable feeling," said Kielburger.

More information about the World Children's Prize for Rights of the Child are available at www.childrensworld.org

Interviews with Craig Kielburger are available on request. Please contact Amy Schlein at 416 925-5894 ext 152 to schedule a conversation

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Craig Kielburger is a long time child rights activist, founder of Free The Children, and co-founder of Leaders Today, the top youth leadership training organization in the world. Craig's work has been featured on Oprah, CNN, and 60 minutes, and profiled in TIME, People magazine and numerous newspapers. His first book, *Free the Children*, won the Christopher Book Award and has been translated into eight languages. Craig is the co-author of the national bestsellers *Take Action!*, *Take More Action!* and *Me to We: Turning Self-Help on Its Head*. Craig has received the Nelson Mandela Human Rights Award, the 2001 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award, the Roosevelt Freedom Medal, the Governor General's Medal of Meritorious Service and the State of the World Forum Award. Craig is currently pursuing a degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Toronto.

Free The Children is the largest network of children helping children through education in the world. More than one million young people have been involved in their innovative youth-driven programs in more than 45 countries. The Toronto-based charity has built 400 schools around the world, provides education to 35,000 children every day and has helped 600,000 families obtain access to medical care. Founded by international child rights activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children has an established track-record of success, with three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize and partnerships with the United Nations and Oprah's Angel Network