



FREE THE CHILDREN

children helping children through education

CRAIG KIELBURGER, CANADIAN CHILD RIGHTS ACTIVIST, WINS INTERNATIONAL “CHILDREN’S NOBEL PRIZE.” AWARD TO BE GIVEN BY QUEEN OF SWEDEN

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Toronto, Apr. 18, 2006 – Craig Kielburger, international child rights activist and founder of Free The Children, is awarded the 2006 World Children’s Prize. Commonly referred as the “Children’s Nobel Prize”, the annual award is bestowed to one recipient for their outstanding contributions to the defense of children’s rights. The award was announced today at a press conference in Stockholm and will be presented by Queen Silvia of Sweden at a prize ceremony on April 20.

The prize is conferred in recognition of Kielburger’s leadership and development efforts through his youth-driven charity, Free The Children. The organization 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. Free The Children has built over 425 schools in 23 different countries, providing education to 35,000 children everyday.

“It is my great privilege to accept this award on behalf of all of the young people of Free The Children who are committed to creating a better world for their peers” said Kielburger.

The award has a special resonance for Free The Children’s founder because the first World Children’s Prize was awarded posthumously to Iqbal Masih, for his fight against child labour. It was an article in a local paper detailing Iqbal’s heroic tale and his tragic death that first inspired Kielburger to take a stand for the rights of children.

“Exactly eleven years ago this month I learned about Iqbal Masih and his battle to raise awareness about the plight of the world’s children” said Kielburger. “It was Iqbal’s example that first inspired me to join the struggle for children’s rights and to found Free The Children. Today, what began as a group of twelve year olds dreaming of changing the world has grown into the world’s largest network of children helping children through education.”

Established by the Swedish Children’s World Association in 2000, the World Children’s Prize is currently part of the world’s largest annual education program about children’s rights. Past recipients of the World Children’s Prizes include Global Friends Award winners, Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel.

Kielburger was selected as the recipient of the award by an international child jury, consisting of former child soldiers, slaves, refugees and street children. Other finalists for the prize were Jetsum Pema, the Dalai Lama's sister and the Rwanda Orphans Organization, aiding children orphaned during the country's civil war in 1994. The prestigious award is accompanied by a \$40,000 USD prize which will help ensure the continuing success of Free The Children programming around the world.

More information about the World Children's Prize is available at www.childrensworld.org.

Craig Kielburger is a long-time child rights activist and founder of Free The Children, the world's largest network of children helping children through education and three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is the co-founder of Leaders Today, the top youth leadership training organization in the world. Craig's work has been featured on Oprah, CNN, 60 Minutes, and profiled in *The Economist*, *TIME* and *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!—A Guide to Active Citizenship*, *Take More Action* and *Me to We*. He is co-author of a regular column in Canada's largest newspaper, the *Toronto Star*. Craig is the recipient of an honorary doctorate of education from Nipissing University for his work in leadership development and 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 430 schools in 23 countries, 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.

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