



TIP 2
DONATE MONEY TO YOUR LOCAL CHARITIES

VICTORY Gary Reed celebrates after winning a silver medal in the 800m at the 2007 world championships.
PHOTO: CLAUS ANDERSEN / ATHLETICS CANADA

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND GIVING BACK



Gary Reed
OLYMPIAN AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REED ATHLETICS FUND

The journey to becoming a professional athlete is far from easy. Apart from mental and physical hurdles, most aspiring athletes struggle financially. Gary Reed, former Canadian Olympic athlete, identifies ways to give back.

MEDIAPLANET What were your toughest hurdles to overcome while pursuing your dream of becoming an Olympic athlete?

GARY REED Apart from the mental and physical challenges of staying consistent with a gruelling training regime year after year, the hardest part was trying to make it financially. I did not come from a well-resourced family. I grew up in B.C. with a single mom who worked numerous casual jobs to try to make

ends meet. I often sold belongings to attend training camps and worked many odd jobs throughout high school and after leaving home in an attempt to make enough money to train properly.

MP What kept you motivated to fulfill your dream?

GR I had a clear vision of winning an Olympic medal from a very young age to make my country, coaches, friends, and family proud. I knew that I had a small window of opportunity to do this in my life. What gave me the most motivation was the fear of not trying 100 per cent and having to make every right decision to attain this goal. I didn't want to have any regret.

MP What inspired you to start the Reed Athletics Fund?

GR While I trained with many talented athletes from different backgrounds, one thing was fairly consistent: most of them were struggling financially. As athletes, we trained six days a week, twice a day. In between training sessions, we did recovery work to prepare for more training. Canadian athletes need more financial support to reach their full potential and the Olympic podium. I lived and witnessed this first hand and knew that upon retiring I would find a way to ease these struggles and give back to the sport that gave me so much.

MP What does your foundation aim to do, and what qualifies an individual as a potential candidate to receive support?

GR We aim to support developing track and field athletes throughout Canada. Our goal is to support each athlete with

\$10,000.00 in annual funding over a four year term to help supplement basic training expenses. Athletes are selected based on their community involvement, financial need, athletic progress, and potential and commitment to their training environment.

MP Why is philanthropy so important, and what role does it play in Vancouver?

GR Philanthropy has a massive impact on the betterment of our society. It creates avenues of support that otherwise would not exist. The positivity that surrounds this type of work is infectious. It creates a culture of support, involvement, inspiration, and success. Having travelled to many parts of the world, I believe that Vancouver is in a unique position given its international reputation as a vibrant, tolerant, diverse, and healthy society to establish itself as a leader in this regard.

MP What do you think are some of the most important things that people should know about giving and its value to society?

GR Everyone is positively impacted through giving in some way regardless of the cause. You are not only enriching the lives of those you are giving to directly, but also your own life and, as a result, the lives of those that you choose to closely surround yourself with. The trickle-down effect is evident. Giving brings back the collectiveness that is needed in today's modern and individualistic society.

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DON'T MISS



Be the one who makes the difference of a lifetime

Change begins with one child; one corporation at a time. Mentorship programs are helping B.C. kids as young as six find their way. But while non-profits are changing lives, they face a perpetual struggle for the long-term funding and support they need to thrive.

If life is a game, not all kids start on the same playing field. Not everyone has parents cheering from the stands. Some kids face bullying or incredible pressures from peers outside the home. When a child doesn't feel secure, making progress in life is impossible.

Just one positive influence can make all the difference. A mentor can open a child's mind to a world of possibilities, be the child's cheerleader, and help him or her secure a foothold in the game of life.

"There are thousands of youth benefiting from mentoring programs in B.C.," said Tim Agg, the Executive Director of PLEA Community Services Society of B.C., which runs the KidStart Mentoring Program. "Kids that are mentored tend to do better at school, are supported to find out what they are interested in, become engaged with their community and are less at risk for exploitation and criminal activities."

Building resilience

A mentor can be the tipping point that gives kids the resilience they need when times get tough. Whether it's playing sports with kids, taking them to the beach or hiking, helping with homework or just hanging out, Agg said: "Kids learn well by doing and getting out in the community - any activity that provides an opportunity to experience achievement and success, that exposes them to new skills or experiences, that helps to motivate and cultivate an interest in learning, teaches the practical skills of life."

Men, be brave!

Mentorship programs are built on the spirit and energy of volunteers, and there's always room for more, but male mentors are particularly in demand.

"We most importantly need men to get over their anxieties about volunteering - be brave!" said Agg. "We all remember that person who had an impact in our lives growing up.



Tim Agg
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLEA COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY OF B.C.

Most of the time that person was simply a friend we knew we could rely on and talk to."

Funding for the long haul

Here's the quandary: mentorship programs can accomplish more when they're there for the long-term in a child's life, but like all non-profits their funding is usually short-term, and unpredictable.

"Government and foundation funds are often short-term, and cannot offer long-term financial support even to the most successful programs. The result is a perpetual scramble to find new donors," said Agg.

Businesses can bring stability to non-profits by thinking long-term with their corporate social responsibility programs.

"A strong, loyal corporate donor who can make a long-term investment in a charitable organization does direct good, and it signals to other companies and individuals that they, too, can contribute with confidence," said Agg.

Corporations can also provide mentoring, sharing their perspective and resources with non-profits.

And there are other rewards. "Engagement with [the non-profit] sector can be deeply satisfying," said Agg.

Change may start with one child, or one corporation, but the effects are exponential. When one child thrives, the benefits last a lifetime and that makes all the difference in the world.

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COULD THIS BE FOR YOU?

"I became a KidStart volunteer for the work experience. I've stayed because we have fun together."

-Mark, KidStart Volunteer Mentor for 3 years



VOLUNTEER TODAY!

"She was there for me when I felt like I could not lean on anybody else. Thank you for bringing her to me"

-Sandi, KidStart participant for 6 years

KidStart

Just a few hours a week can change a young person's life.

www.kidstart.ca
604.375.KIDS



KidStart is a program of PLEA Community Services Society of BC