



6 Sept 2009

LEBRON JAMES LAUNCHES LONDON'S NEW BASKETBALL LEGACY



Special guest, the American superstar player LeBron James was today in London to help launch a new basketball legacy programme which will provide facilities, training and opportunities for young people in the capital. The programme will be supported by Nike, the NBA and their Most Valuable Player LeBron James himself.

The programme is focused on creating new opportunities for the game at the grassroots level through the development of a brand new 500-seater indoor community court and the provision of four Legacy Officers. Nike and the NBA have kick-started the fundraising by pledging seed funding for the court which will be built to competition standard and is scheduled to open in autumn 2010 at the Lilian Baylis Community Hub in south London. The hub currently offers sport and physical activity to over 10,000 young people every year. Meanwhile, LeBron James has committed to funding four Legacy Officers to provide coaching to young people in communities across Lambeth, Southwark, Croydon and Brent from now until 2012. The fundraising campaign starts now with corporates and individuals invited to donate at:

www.thesportactionzone.org/basketball



This is LeBron James' first trip to London, which he has devoted to empowering youth, promoting grassroots basketball activity and showcasing sports innovation. He commented, "I want kids around the world to learn that they can achieve their dreams and goals through hard work and perseverance, not just in basketball but in whatever they decide to do in life."

Kate Hoey MP for Vauxhall, the Mayor's Commissioner for Sport and co-chair of the Sport Action Zone which runs the Lilian Baylis Community Hub said, "There is a growing demand for basketball in London and we are so excited that this programme will create more opportunities for local young people to learn, play and compete. Yet this programme has the potential to go even further - in Lambeth and Southwark we already have 1000 young people regularly playing the game, some of whom have even won basketball scholarships to the US where they will gain not only a college education but also the chance to pursue their sporting dreams of playing in the NBA."

Sophie Goldschmidt, NBA EMEA Managing Director commented, "We are proud to be part of this initiative that will give aspiring basketball players not only proper facilities, but also the resources to continue learning the game and structured life skills training. The goal being to provide children and young adults, in these deserving communities, a place to live, learn and play."

To make your donation to the project visit: www.thesportactionzone.org/basketball

For more information

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Notes to editors

▪ **About LeBron James**

LeBron James, 2009 NBA Most Valuable Player, is an internationally recognized basketball superstar who plays for the Cleveland Cavaliers. Selected to the NBA All-Star team every year since he joined the league as the overall No. 1 pick in the 2003 draft, LeBron has electrified fans across the globe with his dazzling play and record-breaking achievements. He is the youngest player in NBA history to win Rookie of the Year honors and reach 12,000 career points. LeBron served as a co-captain of the Team USA basketball team that won the Gold Medal with an undefeated record at the 2008 Summer Olympics in China. Off the court, LeBron James is actively involved in a wide range of philanthropic endeavors, and through the LeBron James Family Foundation, he hosts the King for Kids Bike-a-thon in Akron, Ohio, whose proceeds are donated to the Akron Area YMCA and the Akron Urban League. In addition, as part of an on-going initiative that began in 2008 during the NBA All-Star activities in New Orleans, LeBron and his foundation installed a playground at the St. Bernard Recreation Center, and in 2009, in Phoenix, during the All-Star activities, a playground was installed at the Robson Boys and Girls Club, in Phoenix, Arizona.

▪ **About Sport Action Zone**

The North Lambeth and North Southwark Sport Action Zone (SAZ) was set up by Sport England in 2000 in response to recommendations from Central Government. Sport Action Zones were designed to address the lack of sports activities and facilities in some of the most socially and economically deprived areas of the country and to bring the benefits of the



sport and physical activity to these communities. Over the past 9 years the North Lambeth and North Southwark Sport Action Zone has demonstrated how sport can act as the catalyst for social change.

SAZ started offering basketball to local young people in 2006, working in partnership with organisations including Reach and Teach and Brixton Top Cats. Over the last three years, they have upskilled 21 new community coaches and developed 12 new teams in Lambeth, Southwark and Brent. SAZ is hosted by South Bank Employers' Group.

- **About Lilian Baylis Community Hub**

Previously a near-derelict school, SAZ took over the site in the summer of 2005 to transform it into a community hub with a focus on sport activities and events for the local community. More than 500 young people access the school each week to take part in a huge range of programmes and classes, all of which are free. The community ethos of the site and its success has led to visits from Michael Jordan, David Cameron, HRH Princess Anne and Usain Bolt amongst many others.

- **About the NBA**

The NBA, founded in 1946, is a global sports and entertainment brand that features 30 teams in the United States and Canada. During the 2008-09 season, NBA games reached 215 countries and territories in 41 languages. The league's worldwide reach was also reflected in the 77 international players from 33 countries and territories on NBA rosters. NBA merchandise is sold in more than 100,000 stores in 100 countries on six continents. NBA.com averages more than five million daily visits, with more than 50 percent of the site's visitors coming from outside of North America. Through NBA Cares, the league, its teams and players have donated more than \$110 million to charity, provided more than one million hours of hands-on service to communities around the world, and created more than 425 places where kids and families can live, learn, or play.