



# News Release

## St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School Joins the Jays Care Foundation's Challenger Baseball Program

*For immediate release – April 5, 2024*

Red Deer, Alberta - St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School is thrilled to announce its selection to participate in the Jays Care Foundation's Challenger Baseball Program, an initiative designed to bring the joy and benefits of baseball to children, youth, and adults living with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. This marks a significant milestone for the school, emphasizing its commitment to inclusivity and adaptive sports.

An opening ceremony to commemorate the launch of the Challenger Baseball Program at St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School's gymnasium is scheduled for Monday, April 8, from 11:00 to 11:30 a.m. The event will feature the raising of a special banner, symbolizing the school's proud partnership with the Jays Care Foundation and the beginning of an exciting journey for its students.

"We are eagerly anticipating this new chapter for our students at St. Lorenzo, marking the beginning of what promises to be a fruitful partnership with the Jays Care Foundation," said Joel Peterman, St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School Vice-Principal.

Thanks to the generous donation of equipment from the Jays Care Foundation, students in St. Lorenzo's Foundation/Blended Program will have the opportunity to engage in adaptive baseball and softball. These sports are not just about physical activity; they are a means to teach important life skills such as teamwork, communication, determination, resiliency, inclusion, support, and courage.

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Around 10 students from the St. Joseph High School Ball Academy are set to join the program, planning to meet with participants weekly to aid in skill development. Additionally, several members from the SJHS Ball Academy will be present at the opening ceremonies.

The Challenger Baseball Program, a collaborative effort between Jays Care Foundation, Little League Canada, and Baseball Canada, is tailored to empower athletes with disabilities, ensuring they have the chance to play in a fun, safe, and supportive environment. Through the program, athletes will learn to become more independent, gain confidence, improve communication skills, and set and achieve personal goals.

During the summer months, volunteer community coaches will lead distinct leagues across Canada, while the school year sees the program being implemented in partnership with schools and various community-based organizations. Participants in the program can expect to receive not only in-person training from Jays Care but also adaptive equipment, and a host of coaching tools to enhance their experience.

The impact of the Challenger Baseball Program is profound. Last year alone, it reached over 9,800 participants across 289 programs, becoming the sole sports programming for 61% of the participants, according to their parents and guardians. It has shown significant benefits in increasing independence, self-esteem, peer relationships, and physical literacy among athletes with disabilities.

St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School is honored to be a part of this transformative program and looks forward to the positive changes it will bring to its students and the wider community.

Join us at the opening ceremony to celebrate the beginning of an inclusive, empowering sports journey for our students.

## **About St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School:**

St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School opened its doors in August 2023 and serves students in grades 6 - 9 in Red Deer's Kentwood Neighbourhood.

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**About the Jays Care Foundation:**

As the charitable arm of the Toronto Blue Jays, Jays Care Foundation uses baseball to teach life skills and create lasting social change for children and youth across Canada. Through programs like Challenger Baseball, they work to ensure young people have access to sport and development opportunities, regardless of the barriers they may face.

**For more information, contact:**

Joel Peterman,  
Vice Principal, St. Lorenzo Ruiz Middle School  
150 Kingston Drive  
Red Deer, AB  
(403) 406-7365