

## **A star amongst stars**

*Federal government employee volunteers with royalty, celebrities in international fight for children's rights*

*By Season Osborne*

**Sept. 7, 2006 – Toronto, ON** – It's hard to be humble when you volunteer with a group that includes Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and actor Richard Gere. But for Michelle Douglas, volunteering with *Free the Children International* is just part of her "love...of public service" and a welcome opportunity to help those in need.

Ms. Douglas, an employee with the Department of Justice in Toronto, is president of the Canadian board of directors of the world-renowned children's rights and education group. Founded in 1995 by then 12-year-old *wunderkind* Craig Kielburger, *Free the Children International* has more than one million young people involved in its programs in 45 countries. Luminaries such as Queen Noor and Archbishop Tutu act as its honorary advisors.

Dalal Al-Waheidi, chief operations director at *Free the Children International*, calls Ms. Douglas "phenomenal" because of her commitment and leadership skills, and looks to her for "advice, mentorship and guidance."

Ms. Douglas is also chair of the 519 Community Centre in Toronto, an inner-city meeting place used by over 200 groups. Its executive director, Alison Kemper, describes Ms. Douglas as a "valued and trusted advisor" who is "superbly committed."

"I love the notion of public service, and volunteering is a way of serving the public," Ms. Douglas said.

Ms. Douglas is one example of Government of Canada employees making a difference in their communities. Along with their regular volunteering, thousands of public servants participate in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable project in Canada. In 2005, federal public servants contributed more than \$29.5 million to GCWCC in 113 communities nation-wide. GCWCC 2006 kicks off on September 7 and will run until November 22.

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