Adapted from: http://kidsplayusafoundation.org/benefits-of-youth-sports

* **Benefits of Youth Sports**

The evidence supporting sports participation for young people is overwhelming…It has the power to combat everything from racism to low self-image, to the high-school drop-out rate.” (Sue Castle, Executive Producer of PBS Sports: Get in the Game)

**Physical Benefits**

Children who play sports develop general physical fitness in a way that’s fun, and they establish lifelong habits for good health. This is particularly important at a time when obesity has reached epidemic proportions. The incidence of obesity has increased by more than 50% among children and teens since 1976. It continues to grow at a staggering rate. The 2009 National Survey of Children’s Health showed that non-athletes are 60% more likely to be overweight than athletes.

**Behavioural Benefits**

Young people that participate in sports are less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as smoking, drugs, sex, and criminal activity. For example:

* Female high school athletes are 92% less likely to get involved with drugs
* Female high school athletes are 80% less likely to get pregnant
* Female high school athletes are 3 times more likely to graduate than non-athletes

**Nearly 775,000 youth are involved in gangs.**

* Between 3:00 and 6:00 PM are the peak hours of violent crime, and are also the hours when children are most likely to be the victims of crime
* Teens left unsupervised 3 or more days per week are twice as likely to hang out with a gang member and three times more likely to be engaged in criminal behaviour
* Areas with high crime rates also tend to have lower rates of physical activities

**Studies have shown reduced crime rates in areas with sports-based youth development initiatives.**

**Societal Benefits**

Kids Who Play Youth Sports Are Less Likely To

• contravene the law or go to prison

• join a gang

• abuse alcohol or drugs

• abuse sex or become pregnant

• skip class

• have discipline problems in school

• drop out of school

• become a welfare recipient

Are More Likely To…

• perform well in school

• have higher grades on national tests

• graduate from high school

• go to college

• become and remain employed

• become directors and managers

• become business and political leaders

• contribute to society by participating in social and charitable programs

Girl Athletes Are Prepared for the Workplace

Results from a 2002 survey of more than 400 senior women business executives at companies with more than 100 employees are fascinating:

* 81% played organized team sports growing up and continue to be physically active;
* 86% believed sports helped them to be more disciplined;
* 69% aid sports assisted in the development of their leadership skills and contributed to professional success;
* 68% credited sports with helping them deal with failure;
* 59% noted that sports gave them a competitive edge.

Frances Emerson, senior vice president at Mass Mutual Financial Group said, “And although participation in sports doesn’t necessarily equate to business success, athletics certainly teach women leadership skills, discipline and the ability to function as part of a team – traits that are key to a satisfying career.”