



For Immediate Release

March 8, 2020

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Fort Dupont Ice Arena Successfully Meets Fundraising Goal: New 2- Rink Facility will Ensure Continuation of Children’s On-Ice Programming and Provide Home for District High School Hockey

Washington, D.C. March 8, 2020 - The Fort Dupont Ice Arena Board of Directors is proud to announce that the Friends of Fort Dupont (FFD) have raised \$1,309,610 - surpassing the dollar amount required to launch the construction of the new two rink facility at their Anacostia site. The District allocated money to replace and expand the only full-size indoor ice rink in the nation’s capital, which serves thousands of DC youngsters a year through free or heavily subsidized on- and off-ice programs. These previously allocated funds can now be spent.

Below is an excerpt from the March 6, 2020 letter FFD Board Chairman Willem Polak sent to DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, to alert city officials to the organization’s successful fundraising campaign.

“Last year, the District and the Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena (FFD) agreed on how to proceed with the construction of the long-awaited new, two rink arena at our Anacostia site. When finalized in the District’s Fiscal Year 2020 budget, FFD needed to raise \$1,300,000 to begin the construction phase of the new rink,” Polak wrote. “I am pleased, and thankful, to confirm that FDIA has now raised \$1,309,610 from over 400 supporters with contributions ranging from \$5 to \$250,000! The kids will get their new rink!”

The next steps are with the District: 1) Initiating the solicitation for the construction of the new 2-rink arena; and, 2) review, with FDIA engagement, the current design to reach a final, in-budget design.

In 23 years Fort Dupont Ice Arena has shepherded over 20,000 children, primarily from Wards 7 and 8, but from every part of the city through our Kids On Ice® (KOI) programs; transforming the lives of children, especially those who don’t often get a break. The KOI program includes Learn To Skate, ice hockey, advanced and synchronized figure skating, and speed skating, as well as complementary off-ice training for children ages 5-18. The rink provides skates, equipment, and skating apparel to all who need

them. Fort Dupont offers summer camps, and partners with D.C. Public Schools to offer instruction and ice time free-of-charge to school groups through the Schools Skate for Fitness program. The rink also hosts annual Special Olympics Speed Skating training and competitions; many community members practice their skills or just enjoy the breathtaking view of the U.S. Capitol from the ice during weekly public skating sessions.

Fort Dupont Ice Arena currently serves as “home ice” for eight District schools hockey teams, as well as Coach Neal Henderson’s Ft. Dupont Cannons. Coach Henderson was recently inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, in part for his foundation of the Cannons, which is the oldest minority hockey club in the country. The new two-rink arena will also provide a home for the ever-growing high school hockey community in the area. Gonzaga College High School, for example, has been a long-time supporter of the FDIA. Students from the Jesuit high school provide weekly mentoring and tutoring to elementary age children in the neighborhood through their “Study Buddies” program. In addition to supporting the rink expansion financially, and as part of its ongoing commitment to the community, Gonzaga also plans to earmark a scholarship fund for accepted students at the school from Ward 7.

“A core part of the Gonzaga student experience is service,” says Gonzaga President Rev. Stephen W. Planning, S.J. “Our partnership with Fort Dupont not only gives our hockey team a place to call home, it also gives our players a chance to meaningfully serve kids east of the Anacostia River. That’s been the real blessing of this collaboration, and we’re looking forward to continuing it for years to come.”

FFD is excited to continue this journey with the Anacostia and Greater Washington D.C. area communities and schools.

In Feb. 2019, the National Hockey League and Monumental Sports & Entertainment partnered to raise awareness and commit funds to support FDIA. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and Ted Leonsis, founder, chairman, principal partner and CEO of MSE, which owns and operates the Washington Capitals (NHL), and the Leonsis family led this effort by making an initial contribution. The NHL, MSE and Leonsis family each donated \$100,000, for a total of \$300,000, with the goal of raising the first \$500,000 toward the monies needed for the renovation of the rink.

FFD would like to give a special thanks to Bridgestone Americas, Capitol Skating Fund, Casey Trees, the Congressional Hockey Challenge, Gonzaga College High School, The Leonsis Family, Monumental Sports and Entertainment Foundation, National Hockey League, Walter A. Bloedorn Foundation, and Washington Capitals.

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