

Celebrating Humanity

By: Paul Born

My oldest son (12) calls it the only true international community and for this reason he lectures me that I should be more interested in watching the Olympics with him – because of course my work is about building community. This logic softens after the fifth straight hour in a day that he is glued to a T.V. not only looking like but also smelling like a potato. They say of the 400-hour event there will be more than 500 hours of coverage – I am sure he watched most of it!

My youngest son (8) feels like he is really part of something – every time a Canadian did well in an event he would stand up and do a jig, chanting, “We’re good. We’re good. Oh yeah!”

I need to admit that it is hard in the midst of such enthusiasm to be cynical about the Olympics...and yet.

The Olympic Games are very commercial, filled with hype and dominated by world super powers – who have the money to “craft” some of the best athletes. So at times I do get cynical about them and feel that in a world that needs a bit more cooperation and a whole lot more inclusion the games fall short.

At these moments I need only revel in the enthusiasm of two boys - whom I protect daily from watching the evening news – feeling they are too young to immerse in the fears all around us. They understand that the Olympics is sport and they see the good will within the competition, they learn about other countries, are proud to be Canadian but cheer with equal enthusiasm for some obscure African country because, well, “it was their only medal in the games.” It is easy for them to understand togetherness and in some strange way it all seems hopeful. A hope that the world really is not insane and that good people everywhere can come together to play.

And of course when you are 8 and 13 what better reason to come together than to play.

Related Links:

- Athens 2004 official website: <http://www.athens2004.com/en/home>
- Celebrate Humanity 2004: http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/humanity/index_uk.asp

The Olympic Games remind us that competitors can be friends and equals a far greater percentage of the time than they will be adversaries. - Nelson Mandela

The greatest Olympic moment happens before the start of any competition, when no nation is greater or stronger than any other. - Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations



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