

The Saturday Club Story – Their Legacy of Helping Children

Wayne, PA - **The Saturday Club's** rich history of helping children is still as relevant today as it was 122 years ago at the club's founding in 1886. From the end of the 19th century through today at the beginning of the 21st century, Saturday Club members have tirelessly raised funds and worked countless volunteer hours to improve the lives of thousands of local women and children. As Pennsylvania's oldest women's club, The Saturday Club has long been a standard bearer for social change and innovative charities, with a special focus on initiatives helping sick and underprivileged children and women in need. A quick historical review shows that in 1907 Saturday Club members campaigned to establish Child Labor laws in Pennsylvania, during the Great Depression they created Camp Sunshine for underprivileged children, in 1941 they led an activist movement for the building of a separate Juvenile Detention Home in the Delaware county jail and in 1960 were providing money and volunteer services to the Royer-Greaves School for the Blind. This long tradition continues in 2008 with The Saturday Club's sponsorship of **Dragonfly Forest, Inc.** a camp for seriously ill children.

On March 7, 8 and 9, 2008, The Saturday Club will present their 6th Anniversary American Girl Fashion Show event; the Club's primary fund raising vehicle. The Saturday Club produces the most successful American Girl Fashion Show in the nation and this year's beneficiaries are Dragonfly Forest, Inc. and The Saturday Club Fund for Children. The over 2,000 people attending the six shows will enjoy the spectacle of darling girls, ages 5 to 12, modeling period costumes and contemporary fashions from the popular American Girl series. More significantly, these young girls are learning about volunteerism. In our fast paced lives, where time is our most precious commodity, the commitment to help others made by these children is no small accomplishment. These young ladies are more than just show models; they are society's next generation of volunteers.

Volunteers are what make Dragonfly Forest, and other charities, a success. Dragonfly Forest offers seriously ill children the opportunity to enjoy a free overnight camp experience in an environment designed to meet their physical and medical needs – a place where they can feel normal and enjoy “traditional” summer camp experiences. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Temple University Children's Medical Center work with Dragonfly Forest to provide medical expertise, because caring for 280 children afflicted with such diverse illnesses as Hemophilia, and Sickle Cell requires a specialized staff. The ratio of staff to campers is 2:1. With The Saturday Club's gift, Dragonfly Forest plans to expand their Delaware Valley camp operation by one week, giving more children this wonderful camp experience.

The Saturday Club has always had a particular interest in the care and treatment of sick children. Today we deal with Avian Flu fears, but the 1918 Influenza Epidemic was much worse. During the Epidemic area hospitals were filled to overflowing and were short staffed due to World War I. When hospitals could accept no more patients, The Saturday Club converted their Clubhouse into a 60+ bed Red Cross Emergency Hospital with a separate children's ward. Saturday Club members themselves worked as nurses and cooks caring for the patients.

Recent beneficiaries of the Club's efforts include the Children's Crisis Treatment Center, the Center for Autistic Children, Children's Village, Mommy's Light Lives On, Kid's Smile, Inc. and White-Williams Foundation. With such a rich legacy of community commitment, who knows what contributions The Saturday Club will make in the future?

For questions please contact the V.P. of Communications and American Girl Public Relations Committee Chair – Marla Neeson of Wayne, PA at 610-688-6291 or mpneeson@comcast.net.