

NBA Champion Pascal Siakam Leads Distinguished List of Honourees at Right To Play's Heroes Gala

Youth rising above adversity through the power of play to be theme of signature fundraising event

(TORONTO, June 27, 2019) – Today, Right To Play announced the full list of honourees for its sixth annual Heroes Gala, taking place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on October 17th. The Heroes Gala is Right To Play's annual, must-attend, signature fundraising event, honouring outstanding heroes who are doing extraordinary work to help children and youth rise above adversity.

The 2019 Heroes Gala, with Title Sponsor Sun Life, brings together more than 1,100 community leaders in business, sports, entertainment, government and philanthropy to honour incredible heroes who, through their actions and activism, are helping 1.9 million children weekly around the world find their voice through the power of play. An impactful evening of inspiration and hope, the prestigious awards include: Corporate Hero, Athlete Hero, and Youth Heroes.

The 2019 Hero Awardees are:

- Athlete Hero Award: **Pascal Siakam**, Right To Play Athlete Ambassador, Power Forward of the Toronto Raptors
- Corporate Hero Award: **Dean Connor**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Sun Life
- Founding Chairman Award: **Ralph Lean**, Counsel, Gowling WLG
- Youth Hero Award, Canada: **Danny Charles**, Right To Play Community Mentor
- Youth Hero Award, International: **Music For Development Participants**, Lebanon

"I am so proud and excited to be selected as Right To Play's 2019 Heroes Gala Athlete Honouree," said Siakam. "Growing up in Cameroon, I played sports and games every day that had incredible impact on my education, my personal development, and now my career. I'm humbled to be able to use my position in the NBA to give back to kids, both locally and internationally, and I'm happy to be doing that with Right To Play."

"I'm honoured to receive the Corporate Hero Award, representing Sun Life and our commitment to help build stronger, sustainable communities," said Dean Connor, President and CEO, Sun Life. "Our sponsorship of Right To Play and their PLAY program is one of many initiatives where Sun Life is making a difference as part of our support to help prevent type 2 diabetes."



For a second year in a row, Cirque du Soleil is the featured entertainment at The Heroes Gala, delivering a special performance during the dinner and awards show. A world leader in live entertainment, this iconic Canadian group produces award-winning shows that aim to make a positive impact on people, communities and the planet with its most important tools: creativity and art.

“The honourees of this year’s event have taken incredible steps to help protect, educate and empower children around the world through the power of play,” said Kevin Frey, CEO of Right To Play. “Through their actions on courts, in boardrooms, in classrooms and around the world, they have helped some of the most vulnerable children around the world overcome the effects of poverty, war, disease and inequality. We’re so lucky to have them as our supporters, and want to thank them, and all our sponsors and donors for making this event possible.”

The Youth Hero Awards recognize incredible young champions who are inspiring peers to find their voice and their power. This year’s honourees include Danny Charles, a Right To Play Community Mentor from Beecher Bay, Vancouver Island; and the Music For Development participants, a group of Syrian and Lebanese youth in Lebanon who are learning to overcome the challenges of war and conflict through the power of music and play. Music For Development is the result of a partnership between Right To Play and Silkroad, an organization started by Cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998 to explore how the arts can advance global understanding.

For more information, sponsorship inquiries or table sales, visit www.theheroesgala.com.

About Right To Play

Right To Play is a global organization that protects, educates and empowers children to rise above adversity. We work with children in some of the most difficult and dangerous places on earth, helping them to stay in school and graduate, to resist exploitation and overcome prejudice, to prevent disease and to heal from war and abuse. Pioneers in a unique approach to learning, we harness play, one of the most fundamental forces in a child’s life, to help children dismantle barriers and create opportunities.

For almost 20 years we have been the only global development organization focused exclusively on using the power of play to deliver programs with impact. We bring together teachers, governments, communities and parents to transform the lives of children and youth. Together, we enable children to create better futures for themselves, their families and their societies. We reach 1.9 million children each week in 15 countries around the world, including Canada, where we work in partnership with more than 85 Indigenous communities and urban organizations.

Sun Life in the community

At Sun Life, we are committed to building sustainable, healthier communities for life and we’re



proud to hold the *Caring Company* designation from Imagine Canada. Community wellness is an important part of our sustainability commitment and we believe that by actively supporting the communities in which we live and work, we can help build a positive environment for our Clients, Employees, advisors and shareholders. Our philanthropic support focuses on two key areas: health, with an emphasis on diabetes awareness, prevention, care and research initiatives through our *Team Up Against Diabetes™* platform; and arts and culture, through our award-winning *Making the Arts More Accessible™* program. We also partner with sports properties, including NBA Champions, the Toronto Raptors, in key markets to further our commitment to healthy and active living. [Read more about Sun Life in the community.](#)

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