

Former American Idol star joins Kids Wish Network Holiday of Hope

Philadelphia, PA – The young patients of Shriners Hospitals for Children in Philadelphia were seeing stars on Saturday, April 22nd - one very special star, to be exact. Former *American Idol* finalist Justin Guarini joined the children at *the Kids Wish Network's Holiday of Hope*, where he helped the charitable organization pass out over \$150,000 retail value worth of toys and gifts to the hospitalized children and their siblings. The former *Idol* star also entertained his young fans with a song, signed autographs and gave away copies of his new CD. Justin wasn't the only attraction at the event, however. He shared the stage with former Eagles Cheerleader Monica Devlin, and a host of other very special guests. Also joining the party were Elmo and Zoe, courtesy of Sesame Place, local mascots Hooter the Owl of Temple University, Finly of the Camden Riversharks and the Philadelphia Soul's Soulman, and everyone's favorite superhero, Spiderman, courtesy of Amazing Characters. Each of these guests delighted everyone as they danced and intermingled with the children throughout the afternoon.

Other festivities included fabulous music spun by Cutting Edge Entertainment, whose DJ's kept the party rockin' with great tunes and fun games. Arlen the Magician bewildered all with his amazing magic tricks, and creativity was in abundance as volunteers from the Port Richmond Home Depot's crew kept the kids busy hammering and gluing at their arts and crafts table. Trish Torres of Philadelphia provided a delicious buffet of sandwiches and cookies, and Chick-fil-A supplied yummy chicken tenders to feed all of the hungry party-goers. All were tempted by popcorn, cotton candy and water ices provided by the Philadelphia Water Ice Factory and Concessionary Supplies. A sweet treat was provided by Tastykake, while healthy alternatives were available with vegetarian jerky treats supplied by Primal Spirit Foods and a variety of delicious fresh fruits supplied by Four Season's Produce. Walnut Hill College delivered the fabulous cake and scrumptious chocolate fountain. Eventricity set the party mood with festive decorations, and Majestic Images and Video One Productions were on hand to capture all of these wonderful moments on film and video! The walls were adorned with festive banners provided by the Naz Group. Everyone went home with a beautiful event t-shirt, and

This action packed event would not have been possible without presenting sponsor Team Kids Wish of Exeter TWP Sr. High "Kids Helping Kids". This unique group was founded by Reading, PA teen Justin Nestor who raised money to sponsor his first *Kids Wish Network* event last year by planning a local carnival. This year he expanded his fundraising efforts, and formed the Team Kids Wish group, all of whom traveled to Philadelphia to volunteer at the event. Justin's story has an ironic twist; during the course of his first fundraising efforts for *Kids Wish Network*, he was diagnosed with a juvenile nasopharyngeal angiofibroma tumor and ironically became one of the "wish kids" he was working so hard to help. Justin received treatment for his tumor, had a wish granted to meet country music group Lonestar, and now has vowed to continue raising funds for *Kids Wish Network* every year.

Kids Wish Network's Holiday of Hope was developed to bring pediatric patients comfort and cheer when they need it the most by providing a temporary reprieve from medical treatment. The organization holds this special event throughout the year for hospitalized children all across the country. **Holiday of Hope** allows these courageous kids to momentarily forget about the pain of stinging needles and the anxiety of being away from home. Sometimes laughter really is the best medicine!

Kids Wish Network would also like to thank the all of the wonderful toy and game manufacturers who donated merchandise to make this amazing event possible. A very special thank you to the Piano Wizard, who joined in the day's fun while demonstrating his awesome new piano keyboard. The children were fascinated by the keyboard, and there were many smiling young faces as he showed them how to quickly master a song. The Piano Wizard donated a keyboard to the hospital, and intends to do so for every hospital event still to come!

Kids Wish Network is a nationally recognized non-profit organization dedicated to infusing hope, creating happy memories, and improving the quality of life for children. For more information on Kids Wish Network's programs, please visit their website at www.kidswishnetwork.org.

If you know of a hospital that could benefit from its Holiday of Hope program, or if you are a manufacturer interested in donating products to be given out to these amazing kids at future events, please contact Barbara Askin at 727-937-3600 or toll free at (888) 918-9004.