



Sports News

A Big League Effort To Help Kids

(NAPSA)—Major League Baseball players and kids—it's a natural fit. Add Volunteers of America, a nonprofit human service organization, and you've got a powerful combination for good.

That was exactly what the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) had in mind recently when it went looking for a partner to create a new big-league effort to help disadvantaged children. After considering a number of possible partners, the MLBPA concluded that Volunteers of America, which already benefits children through a wide range of programs, was clearly the right choice.

Through a long-term alliance called Share With a Child, the baseball players and Volunteers of America will work together to help children and families in need and encourage others to get involved through donations of money and time.

"Dream big and dream often," was the advice that Barry Zito often heard from his father. He knows how lucky he was to have someone like his dad to encourage him. Last year Zito, now a pitcher for Major League Baseball's Oakland Athletics, won the Cy Young Award as the American League's best pitcher. Remembering his father's love and guidance, he knows that all kids need someone in their lives to help them. That's why Zito and his fellow Major League Baseball players support the Share With a Child alliance.

Volunteers of America President Charles Gould said that the new partnership "will make it possible to help more disadvantaged kids in cities across America."

The national kickoff for Share With a Child came late in 2002, with well-known players from several teams participating. A group



Winning Combination—Major League baseball player, All-Star Shawn Green and Volunteers of America have teamed up to help disadvantaged kids.

of Major League Baseball players has formed the Caring Gifts Team, which will spearhead involving players in working in local programs that help at-risk, abused, and neglected children. Members of the Caring Gifts Team include, in addition to Barry Zito, Torii Hunter of the Minnesota Twins, Jason Giambi of the New York Yankees, and Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals.

"We want to help kids everywhere," Zito said. "Players will be doing everything we can to make a difference in the lives of at-risk and underprivileged children, and getting other people involved by sharing with a child."

The Major League Baseball Players Trust for Children, founded in 1996, is the first foundation of its kind in professional sports. It was established and is administered by the players themselves.

Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually-based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement.