



Most Valuable Kids!

| BY NANCY TAYLOR |

Here in the Washington, DC area we have a wealth of opportunities for cultural, academic and athletic growth. We can expose our kids to more than most cities in the United States. We can go to baseball games, the theatre or the museums. We have circuses, amusement parks and arcades. Our children are able to play sports in some of the finest youth facilities in the nation, many who employ some of the most elite training professionals to assist them. For many of us, these things are a way of life, and we are truly fortunate. However, there are a lot of kids in our midst who do not have the same advantages. Many of the children in our area will not ever see a professional ballgame, or enjoy a theatre performance. For some at-risk kids, a hot meal is a luxury, so a night at the ball game is a pipe dream.

Enter Most Valuable Kids. Founded by Daryle Bobb, President of Hof Laundry Systems in Beltsville, MD, and his wife, Beth, its humble beginnings were an attempt to "...create a reward system for children and children's organizations that show exemplary behavior, spirit, and community service." MVK has grown to serve multiple areas – its markets include New York City, Omaha, NE and Cincinnati, OH, along with a soon-to-be location in Detroit, MI. Its mission is simple; to fill the unoccupied seats for cultural and sports events with deserving kids who would not otherwise have access to them because of the cost associated with attendance. This non-profit organization accepts tickets to shows and sporting events all around the DC area to donate to at-risk and under-served kids. Over the past several years, thousands of tickets for basketball, baseball soccer and other sporting events have been given to the community groups who serve these kids, providing cultural opportunities these children would have never been able to afford without such a program. Its Board of Directors consists of business people in the area whose mission is the same; to help kids. This hard working group's goal is to fill the empty seats in the sports and art venues all over town with kids who will benefit from being there.

The success of Most Valuable Kids is a dual effort between a group of committed volunteers, a couple of paid employees and a host of donors who are willing to give the tickets they would not use to kids all over the Washington, DC region. The sports heroes themselves get involved too. Washington Wizard's Antawn Jamison donated 20 tickets to six Wizards home games in 2005, and 20 tickets to ten games in 2006, creating "Antawn's Army of Most Valuable Kids." He has promised to continue this program in 2007 as well. NHL player Alex Ovechkin created Alex Ovechkin's Crazy 8s. During the 2006-2007 season, Ovechkin is donating 8 seats to each home game to Most Valuable Kids!

We never really know what will spur us into action. Likewise, most of us will impact people in small ways with the things we do and we may never know it. A child can be impacted by a performance or trip to a cultural event in a way that could change his life. What started off small has become a wonderful opportunity for kids of all backgrounds to reap the benefits of some of the finest art and sporting events in the United States. No donation is too small, and since all of us at one time or another have probably found ourselves with tickets that we cannot use, most of us can make a contribution to this organization. Next time you find yourself in such a spot, consider forwarding them to Most Valuable Kids. You will be glad you did! ♦

Ticket donations are received from corporations and private parties all over the Metropolitan DC area, and are distributed to youth and family organizations who can put them to use. The mission of Most Valuable Kids is to expose these children to new people, places, ideas and cultures. Donations of tickets are given to almost 200 organizations throughout the greater DC and Maryland area, and include such recipients as schools, churches, Boy's and Girl's Clubs and Government agencies.

For more information about this program, how to donate or to volunteer, check out the website at www.mostvaluablekids.org.

How it Works

People who find themselves possessing any number of tickets to local events need only sign on to the site and make arrangements for the Most Valuable Kids courier to pick up the tickets at a location stipulated by the donor. Tickets are then dropped off at the Will Call window at the appropriate venue to be picked up by the recipients. The entire donation process takes just a couple of minutes, and the organization automatically issues a tax deductible receipt. Most Valuable Kids will take donations of tickets up to two hours before the event. Face value of the donated tickets is tax deductible. Donated tickets are consolidated and given to the youth organizations in the area.

To Donate Tickets

Log on to MVK's website at www.mostvaluablekids.org, and click on "Donate Tickets." After registering, donors can fill in the form found on the website. A confirmation e-mail and tax receipt will be sent automatically. Once donors have registered, a simple log-in is all that is necessary for future donations.

To Make a Cash Donation

Cash donations are welcome if you do not have tickets to donate but would still like to support this worthwhile program. The "Make a Financial Contribution" box is accessible from the "Donate Tickets" screen.

