

PRESS RELEASE

Pelham Civics Donates \$1000 to New York Raptors Special Needs Hockey Team

(December 15, 2014 - Pelham, NY) On New Years Day while professional teams from the National Hockey League will compete in their annual Winter Classic, another kind of very special teams will also be competing on January 11th up at the Westchester Skating Academy in Elmsford in their own Winter Classic made up of Special Needs Hockey Teams - one being The New York Raptors.

To help support the team, the Pelham Civic Association has donated \$1000 to this special not-for-profit ice hockey program that provides kids and young adults who have physical and mental disabilities with an opportunity to skate, play and compete in organized ice hockey games.

Pelham Civic President Joe Benefico stated "This money enables the team to purchase valuable ice time for their Winter Classic Tournament on January 11th in addition to helping out with uniforms and equipment".

Pelham Civic member Joe Nunziata who introduced the Civics to the program added "We are proud to support not only the program, but also Pelham Civics' 2013 Man of the Year - Pelham Manor Fire Chief Joseph Ruggiero. Joe is an active volunteer leader in this visionary program, as he serves as both coach and mentor to these special athletes."

Ruggiero and The Raptors' Coaching Staff were recently awarded the Westchester County's prestigious *Rosemarie Siragusa Memorial Youth Service Award*, which recognizes dedicated residents who give back to our youth in the true spirit of community service.

According to Coach Ruggiero: "It's all about giving these challenged kids a chance to learn and play hockey like other kids who are more fortunate. It's amazing to see how powerful their will to compete and have fun is. Quite honestly, I was surprised how quickly the kids build their skating and hockey skills. To see them compete in legitimate games is extremely gratifying! Their progress says as much about the kids as it does about our great staff."

Nunziata continued, "Joe provides encouragement and enthusiasm for these disabled players, promoting dedication and teamwork among the players and their families. This is the type of program and person the Civics whole heartedly supports."

The Pelham Civics is asking the Pelham Community - many of whom belong to the Pelham Booster Club, Pelham Hockey Association and Pelham school hockey teams - to also become a supporter of this special hockey team and program. Donations can be made out to "New York Raptors" and mailed to: New York Raptors , c/o Anne Majsak, 26 Blackthorn Lane, White Plains, NY 10606

About The New York Raptors Team...

The Raptors team is a USA Hockey registered affiliate, consisting of 28 "special" athletes whose afflictions include autism, downs syndrome, cerebral palsy, just to name a few. They skate weekly at the Westchester Skating Academy in Elmsford in the fall and winter. The team is part of the American Special Hockey Association (ASHA), which was created in 2000. Today there are more than 50 ASHA programs across 30 cities nationwide. To learn more about The Raptors, please visit www.nyraptors.org

PHOTO CAPTION: (Standing left to right): NY Raptor Coach Joe Ruggiero; Team Co-V.P. and parent Susan Wiener; Pelham Civic President Joe Benefico; Pelham Civic Officer Joe Nunziata; and NY Raptor Coach, Co-V.P. and parent Steve Grossman.

*Joe Nunziata 914-490-2002
12-15-14, 12:45 PM (FINAL/APPROVED)*