



Catholic Youth Organization Celebrates 70th Anniversary

February 13, 2008

Cleveland, Ohio -- The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) is celebrating its 70th Anniversary in Cleveland throughout this year, culminating in a Gala event to be held June 21, 2008, in the Club Lounge at Progressive Field.

CYO was officially established in Cleveland in December, 1937 when Rev. James O'Brien was appointed as diocesan director. It's rich legacy includes the Knights of Columbus track meets, beginning in 1941 at the old Cleveland Arena on Euclid Avenue. It was held there for 30 years, from 1941-1971. These large CYO track meets brought together the best track and field athletes of the era, including Olympic and World Champions such as Bob Seagren, who set the pole vault world record in 1972 in Cleveland; Frank Shorter, world record holder in the 2 mile run; and Tim Mack, from Cleveland, 2004 Olympic Gold medalist in pole vault. At least 13 world records were broken at the meet by 1975. One newspaper headline read, "9 Olympians Compete in KC Meet; World Records Fall in 440, Vault, Shot"

CYO included such sports as Hi-Chair boxing in the 40's and 50's for 6 & 7 year olds. By 1969, CYO sports included baseball, football, wrestling, soccer, track, speed skating, basketball, and bowling leagues for boys, and basketball, volleyball, softball and track for girls. In 1974, CYO instituted a Coaches Certification Program, which was the first such program in the country. Today, 1200 coaches go through the CYO Coaches Development Program each year.

A few of the notable athletes that participated in Cleveland CYO include Elvis Gerbac, professional football player, who came out of CYO from St. Agatha; Jack Corrigan, former broadcaster for the Indians and currently with the Colorado Rockies, who played CYO at Our Lady of Angels; Mike Hegan, currently an announcer for the Indians and son of Jim Hegan, great Indians catcher for the 1948 Champion Team, who played CYO at St. James before going on to play professional baseball for the Oakland A's.

Today, Cleveland CYO has over 20,000 participants in 19 sports and is one of the top 5 largest CYO program in the country. The 70th Anniversary Gala will celebrate the legacy of CYO and the extraordinary contributions of our student athletes, dedicated coaches and volunteers. All proceeds from this event benefits the Good Shepherd Scholarship Fund for urban CYO programs. For more information contact Katie Marquard, CYO Athletic Director, (216) 334-1261 ext.13.