

## TIX FOR TOTS / HONORS JOSH TAYLOR AS ITS 2007 CHILD ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR



*Recently, the Tix for Tots staff sat down for an interview with the HopeKids Executive Director to talk about the HopeKids partnership with Tix for Tots, his affinity for Tix for Tots suite events, and how seeing live theatre as a child sparked a lifelong commitment to bring hope to families in need.*

### **What is the HopeKids mission and who does HopeKids primarily serve?**

HopeKids provides ongoing events and activities and a powerful, unique support community for children with cancer and other life-threatening medical conditions. We surround these remarkable children and their families with the message that hope can be a powerful medicine. We serve families that have a child with cancer or some other life-threatening medical condition. Approximately 75% of the kids we serve have/had cancer and we serve families at every stage of treatment. Additionally, our program enrolls kids that are in remission from cancer. To have those kids and those families at our events serves as an inspiration to our other kids and families which are just starting out on a similar journey. It is proof that their battle is one that can be won!

### **Tell us about the first time you ever went to a sporting event or theatre show. What do you remember most vividly about that experience? How did it impact you?**

I was always involved in sports growing up, but my mom loved the theatre. When I was 12 or 13, she dragged me, kicking and screaming by the way, to the show *Les Miserables*. I did not want to go! But I went and absolutely loved it and couldn't wait to go again. That was the start of my introduction to live theater and ever since then I've wanted to try and instill that same feeling in other kids and families. It's not something that all families think about doing or even can afford to do, especially when they are facing serious challenges in their lives. So for me, I love that Tix for Tots has theatre shows available to us! One of our families gave us great feedback about a theatre show they went to – they said it was never something they thought about doing or even would have done, but after having tried it, they now look forward to going whenever they have the chance!

### **What do you think it is about watching culture, theatre, or sports that opens up child's imagination so much?**

I think, simply, it's being exposed to something that is outside of their normal environment. It shows them there's so much out there in the world to experience and enjoy. Our families face significant emotional and economic pressures, so it is wonderful that events through Tix for Tots are free to them. I encourage them to just try it and many of them come away from the experience feeling alive and that they've learned so much! For example, with theatre, there's usually a theme or a message and it's a great way for all of us to gain exposure and experience culture.

### **How would you describe Tix for Tots?**

From an event/experience standpoint, I would say “awesome.” From a mission standpoint, I would say “much-needed.” And from an operational standpoint, I would say “simple and easy-to-use.” Tix for Tots is an invaluable, up-to-date community resource for social service organizations. When we’re looking to give a deserving child an unforgettable experience, our first call is to Tix for Tots. Their efficiencies and network of relationships in the community make so many things possible for our kids.

### **How does Tix for Tots help HopeKids to achieve and advance its mission?**

Tix for Tots is a perfect match for our mission which is to take kids to highly-anticipated events that they can look forward to and that help make their futures brighter. For many of our families, the future is uncertain. Tix for Tots provides every single thing we’re trying to do for our kids. I don’t think we could fulfill our mission at HopeKids as effectively without the services of Tix for Tots. Your events make it possible for us to give children a life-changing experience and it gets the families together in a close environment which helps build lasting relationships. It gets the parents talking and sharing with one another, and the children get treated so well by Tix for Tots and they never get to do suite events and other experiences they deserve. It’s incredible that Tix for Tots gives us/our kids the opportunity to sit in corporate box seats for an event!

### **What would you say your kids look forward to most when it comes to their Tix for Tots experience?**

The suite events. I don’t think anything out there comes close to a private suite event experience. The kids just feel like VIP’s! It transports them, and the experience itself, to a whole new level. We have kids who work hard to get their (white blood cell) counts up just so they can get the OK to leave the hospital for a couple of hours to be in a private suite and see a show for just one night. My priority is to give suite experiences to those kids and families who have never done it before through HopeKids and to our kids that are having a particularly difficult time in their treatment and need something extra special to help boost their spirits.

### **How does the relationship with Tix for Tots impact your daily work as the head of HopeKids here in the Twin Cities?**

You make my job easier... and you keep me busy! There are always events coming up through Tix for Tots that I can’t resist and that I want our kids and families to experience. I visit the Tix for Tots website all the time to learn about your upcoming events. The only time I’m not requesting tickets from Tix for Tots is when I’m on vacation and even then the temptation is still there!

### **How would you like to strengthen the partnership between Tix for Tots and HopeKids?**

If Tix for Tots existed in every city with HopeKids... that would be the “dream ticket”!

