

## Isha Foundation's Project GreenHands Grasps the 'Sport for the Environment' Award at the Beyond Sport Summit in Chicago

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*Green Initiative Honored for Mobilizing 1 Million People to Plant 8.2M Trees*

CHICAGO, Oct. 4 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- On September 30th at the 2010 Beyond Sport Summit hosted in Chicago, Project GreenHands was honored as winner of the "Sport for the Environment" award. Beyond Sport is a global initiative that promotes, develops and funds the use of sport to create positive social change.

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The Summit featured a panel of distinguished judges and speakers including leaders in business, media, government, and social development, such as Tony Blair, former prime minister of the UK, HRH Prince Feisal Al-Hussein of Jordan, founder of Generations for Peace, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley, Wilfred Lemke, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, as well as renowned athletes and Olympic gold medalists including Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Ian Thorpe, and Michael Johnson.

Project GreenHands (PGH) is a massive tree planting initiative sponsored by Isha Foundation, Inc., an international non-profit organization with U.S. headquarters in McMinnville, TN. Using sports as an entry point to unite, uplift and inspire impoverished rural communities in Tamil Nadu, India, Project GreenHands has mobilized over 1 million people to plant and nurture 8.2 million trees to offset severe environmental degradation caused largely by rampant industrial activity. By year-end 2010, PGH's grassroots initiative will have planted an impressive 10 million saplings in just 4 years to alleviate stress on the environment.

Community participation is the key to Project GreenHands' success. Since 2005, nearly 10,000 women and men have participated in 830 sports teams sponsored by the program. Organizing and coaching volleyball teams, implementing yoga programs, facilitating tournaments, and hosting the "Rural Olympics" provides an opportunity for PGH to raise awareness and educate the public about environmental degradation, conveying the urgent need for action. The 2006 'Rural Olympics' kicked-off the first ever state-level mobilization of the population, resulting in plantation of over 850,000 saplings by over 250,000 people in a single day, earning the project a Guinness World Record.

By educating and encouraging public responsibility for soil retention, water conservation and green cover, PGH aims to halt further damage to lands in the region by planting 114M trees, restoring green cover to a critical threshold of 33% and reducing the risk of widespread desertification and famine. Desertification is the devastating depletion of soil quality resulting in the conversion of fertile lands into desert. According to a United Nations' report in 1998, with the current rate of land degradation, desertification is expected to spread over as much as 60% of the state of Tamil Nadu by 2025 if drastic action is not taken to support environmental recovery in the area.

Beyond Sport Limited is a social entrepreneurship registered in UK specializing in the development of sport and entertainment. Beyond Sports is a major global sports initiative that seeks to identify the world's most inspirational sports projects, celebrate their achievements, identify why they succeed and use them to inspire others. This year witnessed over 400 entries for 12 categories covering the entire sporting spectrum of health, environment, social inclusion, education, and conflict resolution. This year's environment category had contenders with 18 projects from US, Canada, Switzerland, UK, Botswana, Israel, Japan, Cuba, India and Kenya.

For donations, details and information on lending your hands to Project GreenHands, visit: [www.ProjectGreenHands.org](http://www.ProjectGreenHands.org) (Photos of sports events and mass plantation drives available upon request.)

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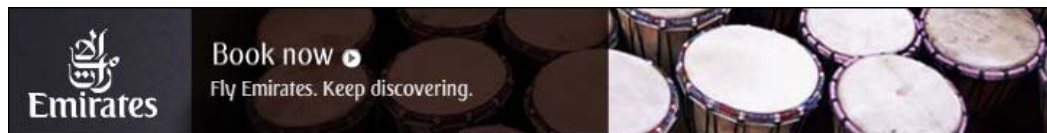
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