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## **Baseball Great Jim Abbott Shares Stories, Tips and Inspiration with Orangewood Children**

**Orange, CA** – Local Major League Baseball great Jim Abbott paid the children at the Orangewood Children’s Home a special visit tonight. His message – believe in yourself and don’t get discouraged.

Abbott spoke at the invitation of Orangewood PALS, an auxiliary of Orangewood Children’s Foundation that hosts a monthly “speaker night” at the Home on the first Tuesday of each month. Speaker night brings educational and inspirational speakers to talk to the children at the Home. Many have overcome their own personal obstacles to achieve success in their lives. Abbott is a former baseball player who, despite being born without a right hand, went on to become a successful collegiate, Olympic and Major League Baseball pitcher. He was the gold-medal winning Olympic pitcher for the U.S. team at the 1988 Seoul, Korea games. He pitched for the California Angels (1989-1992, 1995-1996), the New York Yankees, the Chicago White Sox, and the Milwaukee Brewers. Perhaps his most famous highpoint was throwing a no-hitter for the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium in 1993.

Abbott spoke for about 30 minutes to the children who ranged in age from toddlers already in their pajamas to teens. He shared about his childhood growing up in Michigan where sports were a way of life. Abbott learned at a young age that through sports he could be like everyone else.

Abbott shared the story of not learning to tie his shoes until the second grade when a caring teacher figured out how to do it one-handed. He stressed to the children to “believe in yourself and your own way of doing things. Don’t get discouraged if it takes you longer than others to achieve your goals.”

He shared that he hasn’t always liked his “little hand” as his daughter once called it when she was a pre-schooler. But it has taught him lessons over the years...that life isn’t easy but you need to make the most of what you have.

## Orangewood PALS Speaker Night Featuring Jim Abbott

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Abbott asked for two volunteers from among the children to demonstrate how he could catch a ball with the glove in his left hand, then quickly transfer the glove to his right arm to free up his left hand to throw the ball. A 16 year old boy who helped with the demonstration commented that Jim had an old mitt. Abbott commented, "I'm an old guy" (he's 41).

After speaking, Abbott answered the children's questions – both silly and poignant. One child asked if he had a name for his "little hand". "No," he said. The child then suggested "little finger" (Abbott actually has a single small finger on the hand). Abbott laughed and said he would think about it. A teen girl asked if he had had a happy childhood. Abbott responded yes but "I knew what it was like to be lonely, especially when starting a new school and feeling different." He added, "But difficult times make you better." Abbott then signed autographs and posed for individual photos with the majority of the children. Afterward PALS members played bingo, offered manicures and did crafts with the children.

Keith Anderson, Recreation Director at the Home, said, "We really appreciate the ongoing support of PALS and their speaker nights. Having Jim Abbott here was inspiring and great fun for the children, and a thrill for the staff."