** PRESS RELEASE**

**adidas Presents Little Performers**

**An innovative, scientifically proven approach to developing footwear especially for infants**

***Herzogenaurach, August 2012****;* adidas announces the Little Performers program - a scientific approach to developing footwear specifically for the needs of infants (children aged 0-4 years). Little Performers is an initiative combining adidas’ wealth of expertise in shoe making, design and testing with renowned international expert in infant footwear Prof. Dr. Markus Walther - Medical Director of the Centre for Foot and Ankle Surgery at Schön Klinik, München-Harlaching and FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence. With his help, adidas continues to perfect ways to ensure healthy foot development for happy, active infants.

Research shows that healthy and active infants should take up to 10,000 steps every day and that over 70% of their foot problems come from wearing the wrong shoes. As a result, parents are seeking constant reassurance that their child’s footwear will provide both the comfort and the protection they need to remain safe whilst being active. Moreover, an infant’s feet are quite different from an adult’s - which means that merely ‘shrinking’ an adult sized shoe is not sufficient - this means that a completely unique design rationale is required.

Katrin Bressel, adidas’ Senior Product Manager for Kids Footwear comments on the significance of Little Performers; *“Kids are the athletes of the future and we are very passionate about making sure their feet have the best possible start in life This is why we have teamed up with biomechanical and medical experts to further ensure that our infants footwear supports a healthy and natural foot development We are proud to be focusing on this issue and through our partnership with Prof. Dr. Markus Walther we believe we have the right team in place to make the program a benchmark for the future development of the Kids footwear category”.*

In response to these insights, adidas have become the first sports brand to focus on this issue on a Global scale. Through the Little Performers program, adidas have combined 60 years of product development expertise with insight from industry leading doctors and biomechanics to define five key criteria for ensuring infants have happy, healthy feet. Itt is these five key criteria that adidas puts at the center of developing its infant footwear

1. **Forefoot Flex:** When walking barefoot, the foot flexes naturally. To support natural movement, the initial flex in adidas infant shoes must be in the toe area.
2. **Right Size:** Infants can’t tell you if their shoes fit properly – ensuring a correct fit can be difficult. Given that infants can move through three sizes per year, the adiFit system allow parents to regularly check for correct sizing.
3. **Low Heel Spring**: Recognizing the importance of little to no heel lift in infant’s shoes, to allow proper development of the Achilles tendon.
4. **Arch Support**: Babies and infants have relatively flat feet, so it’s best to remove artificial supports (such as orthotics or arch supports) to allow the foot to develop naturally.
5. **Foot Climate**: Kids tend to sweat more through their feet than adults, so adidas uses extremely durable sockliners, and special materials that transport moisture away from the foot.

Prof. Dr. Markus Walther commented on the scientific importance of this new program; *“The adidas Littler Performers program is a hugely significant piece of work in the context of infant’s footwear, and I am very proud to be part of it. Being a specialist foot doctor and father of three children I see on a daily basis the problems that can occur when infants wear the wrong shoes – particularly during their growths phases. I am looking forward to work with adidas to develop footwear that keeps the health and wellbeing of the child in mind at all times.”*

**END**

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