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CELEBRITIES, RECORDING ARTISTS & SPORTS LEGENDS RALLY IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

2010 Special Olympics USA National Games Open on Sunday July 18

WASHINGTON D.C. /July 8, 2010—Throughout the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games taking place July 18-23 in Lincoln, Neb., Special Olympics athletes will have the opportunity to listen, learn and interact with recording artists, fashion models and sports greats. Opening and Closing Ceremonies will boast musical performances from **Jars of Clay**, **Michael Sarver**, **Sandi Patty**, **Kristina DeBarge** and **FeFe Dobson**, to name a few. Model and actress, **Brooklyn Decker**, will serve as Co-Emcee with Special Olympics athlete and co-star of the 2005 Fox Searchlight and Farrelly Brothers film *The Ringer*, **Eddie Barbanell**.

In addition, professional sports figures such as tennis great--**Andy Roddick**, softball gold medalist--**Amanda Freed**, volleyball great--**Tom Hoff** and retired NFL stars—**Matt Blair**, **Joey Browner**, **Tony Covington** and **John Turner** will be on-hand throughout the week for sports clinics, a flag football scrimmage and to show their support in the stands and on the fields of play.

The Opening Ceremony of the National Games will take place on Sunday, July 18 from 3:00pm-5:30pm CT at the Devaney Sports Center on the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (UNL) campus. The event will be available to watch live via webcast on www.2010specialolympics.org and www.netnebraska.org , as well as rebroadcast on PBS stations around the country. Likewise, Closing Ceremony will take place on Friday, July 23 from 7:00pm-10:00pm CT at the Devaney Sports Center and will also include a youth rally.

A flag football clinic and unified celebrity flag football scrimmage will be played on the Mabel Lee Fields at UNL from 7:00pm-9:00pm CT on Tuesday, July 20. The demo will be part of Special Olympics North America's first flag football endeavor at the national level, introducing the sport to Programs, family members and the Lincoln community.

BIOGRAPHIES

Opening Ceremony

Brooklyn Decker

A model and an actress, Brooklyn Decker, has been featured in several magazines including Teen Vogue, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, and GQ. She has been in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue every year since 2006 and was on the cover in 2010. Decker has also done campaigns for the Gap, American Eagle and Victoria's Secret, and has had guest appearances on television shows including Ugly Betty and Royal Pains. She recently wrapped her first feature film, *Just Go with It*, which will premiere in February 2011. Decker became active in the Special Olympics in her hometown of Charlotte.

Eddie Barbanell (Co-Emcee)

Eddie Barbanell is an actor with Down Syndrome. He has been acting since 2000 and is best known for his role in “The Ringer” where he played a Special Olympics athlete alongside Johnny Knoxville. Barbanell is very active in the *Spread the Word to End the Word* Campaign.

Jars of Clay

Jars of Clay (Charlie Lowell, Dan Haseltine, Matt Odmark, Stephen Mason) began their career when they won a 1994 Gospel Music Association contest after submitting a demo. They released their first album in 1995. Jars of Clay’s single “Flood” became one of the biggest mainstream hits ever by a Christian label, peaking at number 37 on the Billboard Hot 100 and number 12 on the Billboard Modern Rock Chart.

Sandi Patty

Sandi Patty has recorded 30 albums, five of which are gold and 3 have gone platinum. She has won 39 Dove Awards, five Grammys, four Billboard Music Awards, and in 2004 was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Patty started her career in the late 1970s and has become one of the most recognizable female gospel singers in the nation.

Michael Sarver

Michael Sarver appeared on the eighth season of American Idol, where he finished in the top ten. He toured with American Idol earning a 2009 Teen Choice Award nomination for Choice Summer Tour. Sarver’s first album is due to be released July 27, 2010. It will be a self-titled, country album.

(Other performances by blues fusion band, *Small Change* and an original song by Special Olympics athlete, David Steffan)

Closing Ceremony

Kristina DeBarge

Kristina DeBarge first appeared on national television in 2003 as a contestant on American Juniors, a spinoff project from the creators of American Idol. She released her debut album, “Exposed”, in 2009 and it debuted at number 23 on the Billboard 200. Her debut single, “Goodbye”, peaked at number 15 on the Billboard Hot 100. DeBarge was nominated for the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards for Best Choreography in a Video and the 2010 Image Awards as Outstanding New Artist.

FeFe Dobson

FeFe Dobson released her first album in 2003 and it debuted at number one on the Billboard Heatseekers Album Chart. Her songs have been used in several movies and television shows including American Dreams, Raising Helen, The Vampire Diaries, and One Tree Hill. She co-wrote “Start All Over” sung by Miley Cyrus and was highlighted as a performer at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards.

(Other performances by winner of the 2004 “*Oprah Winfrey Pop Star Challenge*,” LaShell Griffin and an encore by Sandy Patty)

Professional Athletes

Andy Roddick

Andy Roddick is a top-ranked American professional tennis player and the only American ranked in the Association of Tennis Professionals Top 10. He is currently ranked 9th by the ATP world rankings. In 2003 he became a Grand Slam singles champion when he won the title at the 2003 US Open, defeating Juan Carlos Ferrero in the finals. Roddick has reached four other Grand Slam finals including Wimbledon three times and the US Open once.

Amanda Freed

Amanda Freed is one the most prominent professional softball players in the United States. A member of UCLA's softball team from 1999 to 2001, Freed led the Bruins to multiple national title games. In 2000, Freed was chosen as an alternate for the USA Olympic Softball Team and in 2004 led team USA to Gold in Athens, Greece.

Tom Hoff

Tom Hoff is a three time Olympic indoor volleyball player and was the captain of the team that won the gold medal in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The 6'8" middle blocker has long been a dominant force at the net, often leading the team in blocks and hitting percentage. In his 13 year career on the National Team and as a professional volleyball player, Tom has competed all over the world including Japan, Brazil, Greece, Australia and Italy.

Matt Blair

Matt Blair is a retired linebacker from the Minnesota Vikings. Selected out of Iowa State University by the Vikings in the second round of the 1974 NFL Draft with the 51st overall selection, Blair played for 12 seasons from 1974 to 1985. Blair established himself as one of the NFL's top linebackers, earning Pro Bowl honors for six consecutive seasons (1974-1985). He appeared in Super Bowls IX and XI with the Vikings.

John Turner

John Turner is a retired professional football player who played 10 seasons in the NFL. After graduating from the University of Miami, Turner was drafted by the second round of the 1978 NFL draft by the Minnesota Vikings. He played Cornerback for the Vikings from 1978-1983 and 1985-1987, spending the interim season with the San Diego Chargers. Turner currently works as an administrative assistant at Park Center Senior High School in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

Joey Browner

Joey Browner is also a 4-time member of the John Madden "All-Madden Team" and a five time NFL Hall of Fame Nominee. Browner was a first round draft pick from USC, and 19th overall pick as safety of the Minnesota Vikings in 1983. In all, Browner was selected to six Pro Bowls, in 1985-1990 while playing with the Vikings (1983-1991). He finished his career playing with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1992.

Tony Covington

Tony Covington is a former NFL safety, having played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Seattle Seahawks, as well as the Tampa Bay Storm of the AFL. Covington was selected from Virginia in the fourth round of the 1991 NFL Draft. He is currently on the Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff.

(Other Sports Figures playing a role at Games include Honorary President of the PGA--Brian Whitcomb, Nebraska Football Academy's Vershan Jackson and Northwest Missouri State Coach Mel Tjeerdsma)

The National Youth Rally will be the culminating event held in conjunction with the Closing Ceremony of the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games on Saturday, July 23. The Rally will celebrate a week of athletic achievements and will launch a legacy of commitment to youth service. An estimated 5,000 young people, with and without intellectual disabilities, will be in the audience for an inspiring and motivational event that will be a call to action for renewed commitment to universal respect, dignity and acceptance.

The Games will feature more than 3,000 athletes from 48 states around the country competing in 13 sports throughout the week. With the help of 1,000 coaches and 8,500 volunteers the Games will be the largest athletic event of its kind in the history of the state of Nebraska and one of the largest in the world for 2010.

About the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games

The 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games in Lincoln, Nebraska will showcase and celebrate the Special Olympics movement and athletes from across the United States, while illustrating the power of sports to educate and inform about the true abilities and achievements of people with intellectual disabilities. In addition to sports, the USA National Games will offer various programs in health, wellness and education. To learn more, please visit www.2010specialolympics.org

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