

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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33 Students Awarded Scholarships Through USC’s Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund

-- ‘Swim With Mike’ Celebrates 29th Anniversary --

- ◆ *‘Swim With Mike’ annual event raises funds for scholarships for disabled athletes*
- ◆ *\$769,400 dispersed to attend university of students’ choice*

LOS ANGELES – March 31, 2009 – The University of Southern California (USC) will award Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarships to 33 disabled athletes at the annual “Swim With Mike” on Saturday, April 18 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at USC McDonald’s Swim Stadium. Of the 33, eight are new to the Swim With Mike family. A total of 14 are enrolled at USC and 19 at universities spanning the nation.

Benefiting the Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund, the Swim With Mike (www.swimwithmike.org) swim-a-thon celebrates its 29th anniversary of providing tuition and financial assistance toward housing and books for physically challenged student athletes. Since 1981, Swim With Mike has raised more than \$8.7 million for 77 Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarships for students who have overcome life-challenging accidents or illnesses. The fund is the only one of its kind allowing students to pursue both undergraduate and graduate degrees at USC and, beginning eight years ago, other national universities.

In order to qualify for a scholarship, applicants must have suffered an illness or injury that resulted in a physical disability that substantially limits major life activity; have participated in organized high school or college athletics prior to the illness or injury; meet admissions requirements of the selected university, and maintain a 2.5 GPA while enrolled.

The scholarship fund is supported by corporate and private donations, and the annual “Swim With Mike” swim-a-thons (www.swimwithmike.org). Swim With Mike began as a fund-raiser, “Swim For Mike,” to purchase a specially equipped van for three-time All-American USC swimmer, and recent NCAA Inspiration Award winner Mike Nyeholt, who became paralyzed in a motorcycle accident in 1981. At Nyeholt’s suggestion, the excess monies raised that year were used to aid other athletes overcome paralyzing or physically disabling injuries or illnesses, and return to school. With the help of Nyeholt’s teammate and now USC Associate Athletic Director Ron Orr, “Swim With Mike” was born the following year when Nyeholt returned to swim laps.

“To not be able to play the sport you love can be devastating, but my friend Ron Orr started the Swim With Mike swim-a-thon to prove that there is a support system to moving on, especially when it comes to education,” said Nyeholt. “It has been gratifying that the funds are allowing us to do just what the mission of the Physically Challenged Athletes Fund is, and that is to help athletes overcome their tragedies...no matter whether you’re a Trojan, a Hoya or a Longhorn.”

Nyeholt adds that the fun-filled day will feature Coach Pete Carroll and the Trojan football team competing in a relay race with the USC song girls, as well as a kids' corner, an Olympic swim clinic coached by USC Olympians and the USC swim team, barbecue, a silent auction and a raffle. Making its debut is a surf polo match featuring LA County lifeguards and Olympian Larry Felix.

“It’s exciting to be able to include new universities to our Swim With Mike family,” adds Orr. “We have eight new recipients from Honolulu to Washington, D.C., and we thank our sponsors and the tireless efforts of our volunteers who have helped us make an impact on these students’ lives.”

The Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund boasts an impressive recipient and alumni list, ranging in age from 18 to 38, pursuing careers from cinematography to business, medicine and law. Athletes have represented 20 different sports on levels ranging from high school junior varsity to NCAA Division 1.

For the fifth year, Swim With Mike Hawaii will take place at University of Hawaii’s Duke Kahanamoku Aquatics Complex on May 30, 2009. For more information on sponsorship or participation in the swim, call 808-384-3517 or email swimwithmikehi@hotmail.com.

2008 - 2009 Swim With Mike Recipients

NEW USC Students

Name	Accident/Illness	Sport	School/Major/Year
Ryoko Nakajima Tokyo, Japan	Transverse Myelitis resulting in paralysis	Tennis, wheelchair basketball, swimming	USC – Senior Cinema

NEW National Recipients

Name	Accident/Illness	Sport	School/Major/Year
Andrew Donnellan Tucson, AZ	Gymnastics tumbling accident Quadriplegic	Gymnastics	University of Arizona – Media Arts, Psychology/Freshman
Thomas Everett Spokane, WA	Skiing accident T-9, Paraplegic	Cross country runner	Whitman College – Business, Political Science/Freshman
Maureen Fausone Wilmette, IL	Diving accident left her paralyzed from the chest down	Cross country, swimming, basketball, volleyball, tennis, golf, soccer, skiing, hockey	Stanford University – Math or Science/Freshman
Regan Linton Denver, CO	Car accident T-4, Paralyzed from chest down	Swimming, cross country, softball, soccer	University of Denver – Masters in Social Work, International Studies/1 st Year (USC undergrad recipient)
Kyle Massey Ladera Ranch, CA	Fell 5 ½ stories off balcony T7-T9 Injury, Paraplegic	Football, baseball	Irvine Valley/Sophomore
Austin Whitney San Juan Capistrano, CA	Car accident T12-L1 level, Paraplegic	Lacrosse, football, soccer	University of California at Berkeley – Pre-law/ Sophomore
Ann Yoshida	Car Accident	Gymnastics,	Utah State Graduate School –

Mililani, HI	Paraplegic	swimming, hiking, surfing, running, golf	Masters Program in Rehabilitation Counseling/Speech Pathology
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Returning USC Students

Name	Accident/Illness	Sport	School/Major/Year
Chris Cantwell Chino Hills, CA	Diving accident Quadriplegic	Swimming, water polo	USC – PhD Physics
Michael Dieringer Albion, MI	Motorcycle accident C5-6 quadriplegic	Golf, baseball, tennis, soccer	USC – Engineering /Junior
Donald Hammond San Pedro, CA	Motorcycle accident Left leg paralysis	Football, wrestling, track	USC Law School/3 rd year
Chad Hendrickson Cerritos, CA	Beach accident Quadriplegic	Swimming, water polo	USC – Masters/Construction Engineering
Alex Johnson Lake San Marcos, CA	Injury during rodeo competition Quadriplegic	Rodeo, football, wrestling, track, skiing	USC – Business/Senior
Brandon Johnson Colorado Springs, CO	Gym accident Suffered a C5-6 spinal cord injury (quadriplegic with some limited movement in his shoulders and arms)	Football	USC – Psychology, Pre-Med/Senior
Michael McNamara Culver City, CA	Sports accident Paraplegic	Basketball	USC – Sociology Major, Music Recording Minor/Senior
Matt Oka Newport Beach, CA	Bodysurfing accident Paralyzed from neck down	Swimming, Surfing,	USC – Business/Junior
Rocky Paneno Glendale, CA <i>(his brother Sam Paneno was the first national recipient attending UC Davis Law School)</i>	Railing collapsed, fell six stories and was in a coma for two weeks Paraplegic	Football, gymnastics, track	USC – Mathematics/Senior
Joey Pulford Redondo Beach, CA	Beach accident Quadriplegic	Water polo, swimming	USC – Graduate School/Planning
Kristina Ripatti Los Angeles, CA	LAPD officer who was shot and paralyzed while patrolling with the Southwest Division's gang enforcement detail on June 3, 2006. Paraplegic	Soccer	USC – Graduate School
Tyler Warnock Lucerne Valley, CA	Car accident Paraplegic	Baseball, Basketball, Football	USC – Sociology/Senior
Jeff Wood El Cajon, CA	Leber's Disease, a rare mitochondria disease. Blind 20/800 vision	Track, baseball-currently on the USC Track Team	USC – Kinesiology (Business Administration minor)/Senior

Returning National Students

Name	Accident/Illness	Sport	School/Major/Year
Joseph Broc Haleiwa, HI	Spina Bifida - myelomeningocele, below the knee paralysis, uses wheelchair	Outrigger canoe paddling	Hawaii Pacific Univ. – Communications/Junior
Tricia Downing Denver, CO	Hit by a car while cycling training T-4 paralysis (paralyzed from the chest down)	Gymnastics, diving, cycling, triathlon	Regis University – Graduate degree nonprofit management
Kenneth Gibson Diamond Bar, CA	Football accident Paralyzed and unable to walk or write	Football, track	CSU Fullerton – Business/Junior
Colin Heffern Cheyenne, WY	Accident – Belly flop from a tree into a pile of leaves C-4 Spinal Cord Injury no functional movement below shoulders	Tennis, golf, swimming, soccer	Colorado St. – Landscape Architecture/Senior-Year four of five
Joseph Jackson Chandler, AZ	In 2005 Jackson was tackling while playing defense as a strong safely. He was airlifted off the field. C6 Spinal Cord Injury	Football, wrestling, track	Arizona State – Electrical engineering/Sophomore
Joe Kay Tucson, AZ	Carotid artery was torn during post game fan celebration; suffered a stroke, which left him with hemiplegia (paralysis on one side) and aphasia (loss of language)	Basketball, volleyball	Stanford University – American Studies/Senior
Fulutusi Mailo Kahuku, HI	Beach accident Quadriplegic	Football	BYU Hawaii – Mathematics/Senior
Taylor Price Ridgewood, NJ	Beach accident Quadriplegic	Tennis, golf	Georgetown – Marketing/Finance/Senior
Erick Stanton St. Thomas, U.S.V.I.	Injury from fall off a cliff C-6-7 Spinal Cord Injury/quadriplegic	Football, basketball, baseball	Barry University – Business/Junior
John Tartaglio Milford, Conn.	Bilateral hip disarticulation when he contracted a rare bacterial infection in high school; both legs were amputated at the hip	Football, baseball; Currently triathlon, open water swimming and road racing	Fairfield University – Pre-Med/Senior
David Van Wagener Greenwood Village, CO	Skiing accident Quadriplegic	Skiing	University of Texas – Graduate school/Engineering
Joseph Zinski Voorhees, NJ	Dove into shallow pool C-6 quadriplegic-Asia A, no sensation below chest, no movement waist down	Swimming, soccer, baseball	University of Connecticut – Chemical Engineering/Senior

Editor's Note: Recipients are available for interview

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