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**Athletes Ask Community to Help them *Reach for the Gold*
in Upcoming Special Olympics Summer Games**

Sacramento, CA, April 24, 2009 – More than 750 Special Olympics athletes from 32 Northern California counties are descending on the UC Davis Campus June 26-28 to compete in championship-level play for the 2009 Summer Games. Their quest: to *Reach for the Gold* as they compete in the sport that has required their hard work, time and commitment. Summer Games will feature aquatics, bocce, tennis and track & field events.

Reach for the Gold is both the theme for Summer Games and a community awareness and fundraising campaign for Special Olympics that kicks off May 1 with an assortment of fundraising activities and culminates with a 5K Reach for the Gold Walk. The Walk will begin at the A-Street Field, near Toomey Field before winding its way through downtown Davis, the Farmer's Market in Central Park and the UC Davis Arboretum.

"It's an honor to have the Special Olympics Summer Games so near to Downtown Davis, and to host part of the 'Reach for the Gold' walk," said Joy Cohan, administrator of the Davis Downtown Business Association. "We are encouraging all Downtown businesses to roll out the welcome mat by creating themed window displays, highlighting sports-related merchandise and offering incentives to athletes and their families to shop and eat in Downtown Davis."

In fact, more than 1,200 volunteers and 300 coaches will be on hand to run the two-day event, in addition to the many families of the Special Olympics athletes who will be in attendance, according to Kirsten Cherry, Vice President of Special Olympics Northern California.

There are many ways for the community to support the Summer Games through the *Reach for the Gold* campaign. Participating businesses might collect funds to support the Summer Games through collection

cups, icon sales or special events. Community organizations, student-based groups or individuals are asked to raise money in the way that suits them best – be it car washes, bake sales, bingo parties or more. Anyone- individuals, families, sports teams and clubs can raise money by sponsoring or participating in the June 26 *Reach for the Gold Walk* at 9 a.m., Saturday, June 27.

Every dollar raised will directly support the free year-round sports training and competition programs provided by Special Olympics Northern California for children and adults with developmental disabilities. It will allow our 750-plus athletes to compete at this year's Summer Games.

The Opening Ceremonies and the Summer Games are free and open to the public. The Summer Games is the largest Special Olympics sporting competition in Northern California showcasing four sports offered during the spring season – aquatics, bocce, tennis and track & field.

Several hundred Sacramento-area athletes (including the Davis Team) will be competing in track & field, swimming, tennis and bocce next month to qualify for these games. They will be competing in regional qualifiers for bocce on May 3 in Lincoln Hills, swimming on May 9 in Roseville, and May 16 for track & field at Cordova High School. Last year, about 110 athletes from Sacramento/Yolo, Placer/Nevada counties made it to the games. A similar number of athletes are expected to qualify this year.

Businesses interested in participating in the *Reach for the Gold* campaign are asked to contact Laurie Espinosa at 916-920-2950. To register or sponsor a participant for the Walk for the Gold® go to www.sonc.org/summergames

Reach for the Gold and Summer Games

May 1- June 26	Business and Community fundraising events
7:30 p.m., June 26	Opening Ceremonies for Summer Games (Aggie Stadium)
9 a.m., June 27	Community Reach for the Gold Walk, A Street (Toomey Field)
9-5 p.m., June 27	Summer Games Competition
8-3 p.m., June 28	Summer Games Competition

About Special Olympics Northern California

Special Olympics Northern California is a free year-round sports training and competition program for children and adults with developmental disabilities. More than 13,000 athletes compete in over 170 competitions throughout the region in 15 sports. This requires the extraordinary support and time of over 9,000 volunteers and more than 3,300 volunteer coaches. Programs are free to all eligible athletes. Financial support comes almost exclusively from individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations. Find out how you can be a fan and visit www.SONC.org.