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SPECIAL OLYMPICS
ANNOUNCES MARK LIGGINS HAS BEEN SELECTED TO REPRESENT
NEW Zealand IN INAUGURAL “SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNITY CUP”
PRESENTED BY COCA-COLA

Mark Liggins One Of 16 Special Olympics Athletes Selected to Participate in Football Match To Be Played During 2010 FIFA World Cup™ South Africa

Auckland, New Zealand – 24 April 2010 – Special Olympics New Zealand, together with Coca-Cola, is proud to announce that Mark Liggins has been selected to participate alongside football legends and other celebrities in the inaugural match of the “Special Olympics Unity Cup” presented by Coca-Cola, at the same stadium that just hours later will host a FIFA World Cup™ match. Mark Liggins is one of just 16 Special Olympics athletes that will represent all 3.3 million Special Olympics athletes worldwide during the Unity Cup at Cape Town Stadium in South Africa, on 3 July, prior to a quarterfinal match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Mark will take his global football skills to the Unity Cup as a leading example of the power of Special Olympics Unified Sports®, with the goal of the Unity Cup to support the mission of inclusion and acceptance for people with intellectual disabilities. Mark will have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be on the same playing field as not only other Special Olympics athletes from around the world, but also an incredible roster of football legends and celebrities including: South African President Jacob Zuma, former South African National Football Team captain Lucas Radebe, former captain of South Africa’s National Women’s Football Team Desiree Ellis, and Clarence Seedorf of A.C. Milan, among others.

“We feel incredibly honoured to have an athlete chosen to participate in the Unity Cup,” says Mike Ryan, Special Olympics New Zealand National Sports and Coaching Director. “We are very proud of Mark, who is without a doubt a very skilled footballer, but also his coach and the rest of his team who have helped him achieve this milestone.”

Since the establishment of Special Olympics in 1968, The Coca-Cola Company has been an Official Global Partner. Coca-Cola supports the movement through financial and in-kind support, marketing expertise and hands-on volunteer work in an effort to showcase the dignity and capacity of people with intellectual disabilities on a global stage.

“We have a long and unique association with sport, especially football, and have witnessed over the decades how it can unite people,” said Muhtar Kent, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company and a member of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors. “The Unity Cup is a testament to that power as we have brought together our partners at Special Olympics and FIFA to shine a spotlight on the important values of understanding, acceptance and inclusion that we all share.”

The Special Olympics Unity Cup will be a 20-minute match held on the afternoon of 3 July, showcasing the skills of Mark and his fellow Special Olympic athletes in an extension of the Unified

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Sports® program, which brings Special Olympics athletes together with partners without intellectual disabilities on teams for friendly athletic competition.

“We could not be more proud of Mark as he will be able to take this opportunity playing in the Unity Cup to showcase the ability of Special Olympics athletes on a world stage,” said Special Olympics Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver. “Thanks to our global partner, Coca-Cola, we can turn the world’s attention to football not only as a sport, but as a powerful agent of change that can unite people with and without intellectual disabilities.”

Special Olympics New Zealand was founded in 1983 and conducts more than 200 local competitions in over 40 towns and cities annually. More than 5000 athletes participate in the 14 sports offered by the organisation. Mark Liggins is a 36-year old centre forward from Auckland’s North Shore and has been chosen to represent New Zealand in the Unity Cup. Mark began playing football at the age of 10 and has been playing seriously for the past five years. Mark will be travelling to South Africa with his coach, Kevin Hodges.

The Coca-Cola Company is a FIFA Partner and has had a formal association with the governing body for world football since 1974 and has been an official sponsor of every FIFA World Cup since 1978. Coca-Cola has had stadium advertising at every FIFA World Cup since 1950 and is a long-time supporter of football at all levels, from grassroots to the FIFA World Cup™.

For more information about the Unity Cup, please visit: www.specialolympics.org/unitycup.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international organisation that changes lives by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect worldwide. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to more than 3.3 million athletes in over 170 countries in all regions of the world, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programs. Special Olympics now takes place every day, changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities in places like China and from regions like the Middle East to the community playgrounds and ball fields in every small neighbourhood’s backyard. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org and Special Olympics New Zealand at www.specialolympics.org.nz

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