



Let Me Be Brave

40th Anniversary Gala

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Olympics Massachusetts to Honor Margaret McKenna, Jim Brett and a tribute to **Eunice Kennedy Shriver** at 40th Anniversary Gala April 5

BOSTON, MA – Hundreds of guests are expected to gather April 5 at the Gordon Indoor Track and Tennis Center at Harvard University for “Let Me Be Brave,” the 40th Anniversary Gala to benefit the Special Olympics movement, a world wide program providing sports training and athletic competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Gala will also feature a special tribute to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics.

The “Black Tie and Sneakers”, event is co-chaired by Joannie Jaxtimer of The Bank of New York Mellon and Peter Meade of Blue Cross Blue Shield. The program will honor Margaret McKenna, president of the Wal-Mart Foundation, and Jim Brett, president & CEO of the New England Council, for their longstanding commitment to Special Olympics Massachusetts and to persons with disabilities.

McKenna announced a \$100,000 donation from Wal-Mart Foundation to Special Olympics Massachusetts. “Wal-Mart has been a major supporter of the Special Olympics for many years,” she said. “We are so pleased to be able to support Special Olympics, which provides athletic competition and healthy living programs for thousands of people in Massachusetts.”

The Wal-Mart donation will go to the Healthy Athletes program, an initiative that provides Special Olympics athletes with a variety of free health screenings and educational services.

The Bank of New York Mellon has also announced a donation of \$100,000 to Special Olympics Massachusetts. This donation will support the Young Athletes program – a new and innovative initiative that introduces young athletes (ages 3-7) to the world of Special Olympics and prepares them for competition in the future.

“The Bank of New York Mellon is proud to demonstrate a commitment to the community where our employees and customers live and work. This investment creates opportunities for young kids with special needs to participate in athletics, which fosters confidence and a genuine sense of self. These are wonderful tools at a young age,” said Joanne Jaxtimer of The Bank of New York Mellon. “As the mother of a child with special needs, who has directly benefited from Special Olympics, I know how important it is to celebrate what is and what can be.”

The New Balance Foundation, Bank of America, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, John Hancock and ClearChannel Outdoor have also extended large donations to Special Olympics Massachusetts in honor of this great event.

“This is exciting for Special Olympics. These significant gifts will go a long way towards our programs and services we provide year round to our 10,708 athletes in Massachusetts,” said Bob Johnson, President and CEO of Special Olympics Massachusetts. “We look forward to growing this mutual partnership between Special Olympics Massachusetts and these generous organizations.”

The evening of April 5th will draw crowds from the Boston corporate community as well as Special Olympics Massachusetts athletes, volunteers and families. The event is open to the public and all details and ticket purchases are online at www.SpecialOlympicsMA.org/HallofFame.

About Special Olympics Massachusetts

The mission of Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of well-coached Olympic-type sports for individuals with intellectual disabilities by providing them with continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, prepare for entry into school and community programs, express courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Athletes, and the community. Special Olympics Massachusetts celebrates its 37th anniversary in 2008.

About Special Olympics movement

In 1962 Eunice Kennedy Shiver started a summer day camp for children and adults with intellectual disabilities at her home in Maryland to explore their capabilities in a variety of sports and physical activities. The First International Special Olympics Summer Games were held in 1968 at Chicago’s Soldier Field with 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 26 states and Canada competing in athletics, floor hockey, and aquatics. Today, Special Olympics International serves more than 2.5 million athletes with intellectual disabilities in 165 countries. The Special Olympics movement celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2008.

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