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SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR LAUNCHES “HEROES AMONG US” COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Heroes Among Us to Recognize Role Models and Mentors for Empowering Young Women in Local Communities

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, USA – Today, the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour launched a global campaign to recognize parents, teachers, coaches and community leaders who have encouraged young women to pursue their dreams. The *Heroes Among Us* program asks fans across the world to nominate someone who has made a difference within the lives of young women in the community. The initiative follows in the footsteps of the Tour’s landmark global partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to raise awareness of gender equality issues and create leadership opportunities for women.

To make a nomination, fans can visit www.sonyericssonwtatour.com/heroesamongus and share insights into what makes their nominee a hero. Throughout the season, winners will be named by participating tournaments in their local markets and honored at the tournaments as well as on the Tour’s website (www.sonyericssonwtatour.com).

“All of the players on the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour had someone who encouraged us to dream big and follow our dreams,” said Venus Williams. “These local heroes bring guidance and leadership to their communities and we’re looking to give them the recognition they deserve.”

“As the world’s leading global sport for women, the Tour has a responsibility to inspire and encourage young women around the world,” said Stacey Allaster, Chairman and CEO of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour. “Our players have had to overcome their own challenges to succeed and they are committed to the principles of equality and opportunity, so this is a natural fit for our organization and for our ongoing partnership with UNESCO.”

Nominations will be reviewed by an advisory panel consisting of officials from the Tour and UNESCO as well as Tour players. Five finalists will be announced on September 28 on www.sonyericssonwtatour.com/heroesamongus where fans can cast their vote for the annual *Heroes Among Us* recipient. Online voting will continue through October 4. Criteria include a clear demonstration of the improvement of young women’s lives, a positive impact on individual(s) as well as the greater community and/or a role in supporting gender equality. The winner, based on fan votes, will receive a prize package for two to attend the Sony Ericsson Championships – Doha 2009, including tickets to the final, roundtrip airline tickets, accommodation, transportation, behind-the-scenes access at the tournament and tickets to the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour Year-End Party in Doha, Qatar.

The program celebrates the Tour’s legacy in promoting gender equality for more than three decades. As the world’s leading professional sport for women with more than 2,200 players representing 96 nations competing in 51 tournaments and four Grand Slams in 31 countries, the Tour has not only provided the opportunity for women to excel at the highest level of sport, but inspired millions of girls worldwide who dream big.

Williams, along with fellow current players Vera Zvonareva, Tatiana Golovin and Zheng Jie, and Tour Founder and tennis legend Billie Jean King, serve as UNESCO Promoters of Gender Equality to help raise awareness about issues of importance to women worldwide, and to create leadership opportunities for women through the funding of programs in Cameroon, Liberia, Dominican Republic, China, Jordan and the United States. These players are also featured in the Tour’s “Looking for a Hero” campaign, which helped inspire this unique program. The “Looking for a Hero” advertising campaign shows what strong, powerful women can achieve when given the chance. The campaign portrays the Tour’s players as modern-day superheroes both on and off the court.

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world’s largest premier professional sport for women with more than 2,000 players representing 90 nations competing for \$70.8 million in prize money at the Tour’s 60 events in 34 countries. More than 4.7 million people attended women’s tennis events in 2007 with millions more watching events on television networks around the world. The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour season concludes with the Sony Ericsson Championships – Qatar 2008 in Doha, Qatar, November 4-9, 2008. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at www.sonyericssonwtatour.com.

“In our mission to promote leadership opportunities for women, it is important to recognize and celebrate those who have made a positive impact in the lives of young women in their local communities.” said UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura. “The *Heroes Among Us* campaign as an extension of our partnership with the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is a great opportunity to advocate, both on a global and local level, the importance of gender equality and leadership of women in all domains.”

Since 2006, the global UNESCO-Sony Ericsson WTA Tour partnership has been focused on furthering gender equality and promoting women’s leadership in all spheres of society.

For more information on the program, including rules and guidelines, visit www.sonyericssonwtatour.com/heroesamongus.

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ABOUT THE SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world’s largest premier professional sport for women with more than 2,200 players representing 96 nations competing for over \$86 million in prize money at the Tour’s 51 events and four Grand Slams in 31 countries. More than 4.8 million people attended women’s tennis events in 2008 with millions more watching events on television networks around the world. The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour season concludes with the Sony Ericsson Championships – Doha 2009 in Doha, Qatar, October 27 – November 1 and the inaugural Commonwealth Bank of Champions in Bali, Indonesia from November 4-8. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at www.sonyericssonwtatour.com.

ABOUT UNESCO

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** was created on November 16, 1945. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. Paris-based UNESCO provides a platform where global challenges for humanity can be addressed on the basis of equality among Member States. Founded on the principles of universality, diversity and dignity, UNESCO’s actions continue to be guided and shaped by a set of commonly shared values that include justice, solidarity, tolerance, sharing, equity, respect for human rights, including women’s rights, and cultural diversity, pluralism and democratic principles. As mandated by its Constitution, UNESCO helps to build the defenses of peace in the minds of men. Further information on UNESCO can be found on the internet at www.unesco.org and the Partnership at www.unesco.org/women or www.unesco.org/genderequality.

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