

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

FIVE FINALISTS CHOSEN FOR SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR “HEROES AMONG US” PROGRAM

Fans to Vote Online for Grand Prize Winner in Program Honoring Community Role Models for Young Women

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, USA –The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour announced the finalists for the 2009 Heroes Among Us Program. The five finalists, Tony Brock, Ella Brown-Hughes, Suniti Marathe, Jill Massie-Braun and Maureen Rankine, were selected by a panel of judges based on their leadership and commitment to serving as role models and mentors to young women in their communities.

Voting for the Heroes Among Us award recipient is taking place now through October 4. To cast a vote for the winner, fans can visit www.sonyericssonwtatour.com/heroesamongus.

The winner of the Heroes Among Us program, 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 Heroes Among Us program 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. Williams, along with fellow Tour 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.

About the Finalists

The following finalists were selected by an advisory panel including Venus Williams; Stacy Allaster, Chairman and CEO of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour and S. Gulser Corat, UNESCO Director of the Division for Gender Equality:

- Tony Brock is the Director of the Safe Passage Tennis Program, a tennis program for underprivileged boys and girls, ages 8-18. Brock works tirelessly to help underprivileged children recognize their dreams by encouraging them on and off the court.
- Ella Brown-Hughes, a single parent of five children, operates a shelter for homeless families in her community. Brown-Hughes provides training and education to the homeless by offering opportunities to receive a GED or on-the-job training. She also offers life education classes that teach skills such as how to manage money or how to dress for success.
- Suniti Marathe has been a high school teacher in India for over 20 years and is dedicated to promoting literacy in her community. She operates a children’s library in her home to provide the underprivileged youth in her village with the opportunity to read and write.
- Jill Massie-Braun, a recent survivor of breast cancer, is a cheerleading and gymnastics coach who has spent her life working with women and girls to help them realize their dreams and ambitions. In addition to her work in athletics, Massie-Braun is an advocate for children and families living with autism and has helped promote an understanding of autism by educating the local school system on the rights and needs of autistic kids.
- Maureen Rankine, diagnosed with a neuromuscular disorder called Myasthenia Gravis, has dedicated her life to helping others. Rankine started three non-profit tennis groups, Tennis Against Breast Cancer, the Montego Bay Tennis Program and the Association of Minority Tennis Pros, to encourage youth to strive for success both in tennis and in life.

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world’s leading professional sport for women with more than 2,200 players representing 96 nations competing for more than \$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, from October 27-November 1, and the inaugural Commonwealth Bank Tournament of Champions in Bali, Indonesia from November 4-8. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at www.sonyericssonwtatour.com.



**Sony Ericsson
WTA TOUR**

PRESS RELEASE

The Heroes Among Us 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. Since 2006, the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour has partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to further gender equality and promote women's leadership in all spheres of society.

For more information on the program, please 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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