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PRESS RELEASE

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY RETURNS FROM 102nd ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Boys & Girls Clubs of America Hosts Some 3,200 Youth Workers in San Francisco

BRADENTON— The Boys & Girls Club of Manatee County has just returned from San Francisco and an information-packed three-day meeting exploring some of the most pressing issues concerning the well being of America's young people. A group of ten led by Carl Weeks, Executive Director joined some 3,200 other Boys & Girls Club professionals and board members attending the 102nd Annual National Conference for Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA).

One of the most popular events was the Alumni Hall of Fame Ceremony where this year's inductees – Los Angeles' Mayor The Honorable Antonio Villaraigosa; MLB All-Star Dan Haren; NFL Hall of Famer Steve Largent; NFL referee Mike Carey; NBA All-Star Spud Webb; Chief Operating Officer of McCann Worldgroup in San Francisco Joe Burton; Joint Force Headquarters Deputy Commander Rear Adm. Earl Gay; founder of Coalition to Salute America's Heroes Craig Fitzgerald; renowned architect Timothy Holland; founder of top orthopedic company Greg Nelson and President of the Southern California Veterinary Medical Assoc. Dr. Dayna Wiedenkiller -- received a standing ovation following their poignant remarks about how important the Club was to them in their childhood and how it taught them the importance of giving back. *Law & Order* star and BGCA alum Courtney Vance served as emcee.

"We wanted to present proof positive that Boys & Girls Clubs of America has made a lasting impact on society, and honoring these outstanding alumni certainly illustrates this point," said Roxanne Spillett, BGCA president and CEO.

One noteworthy session included alarming statistics on the "silent epidemic" of high school dropouts and BGCA's response with programs such as Goals for Graduation, Power Hour, Club Tech and CareerLaunch. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author Laura Stepp presented a frank discussion on the increasing level of negative peer pressure facing today's young women and encouraged Boys & Girls Club professionals and volunteers to take the necessary action to reduce high-risk behavior, including premature sexual activity and drug and alcohol abuse.

Both local board members and staff were also drawn to the entertaining and timely discussion on the hip hop culture presented by author and activist Kevin Powell. Powell, who was a part of the

original cast for the first season of MTV's *Real World*, has penned or edited three books, including *Recognize, Keepin' It Real: Post-MTV Reflections on Race, Sex and Politics*, *Step Into A World* and *Who Shot Ya?*

Powell called on the hip-hop generation to grow up. "I think it is embarrassing when you see individuals in their late 20s through their late 30s still acting like children," said Powell. "Not being serious about anything. Not owning up to any level of responsibility."

Equally compelling were the remarks of business guru and BGCA alum Jim Collins. Author of the best-selling *From Good to Great*, Collins encouraged board members and CPOs alike to approach their Boys & Girls Clubs with the same business-like savvy, to illustrate the excellent return on investment their organizations offer their respective communities their organizations offer communities.

This year's conference also served as the eighth anniversary of Boys & Girls Clubs Day for Kids (www.dayforkids.org). Club staff and board members learned about plans for this year's celebration, slated for Sept. 20, which will feature more than 1,200 events involving millions – all celebrating the importance of adults spending meaningful time with the children in their lives.

"Utilizing ideas at the conference we are going to implement an Alumni Hall of Fame and strengthen our Charitable Gift Annuity program," said Valerie Nelson of the Boys & Girls Club of Manatee County "Overall, the conference gave us great ideas, and most importantly -- the opportunity to network with other Boys & Girls Clubs who are facing many of the same challenges we are here in Manatee County."

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County serves over 2,500 youth at six locations (Harlee Middle School, Southeast High School, Bradenton, East Bradenton, DeSoto and Palmetto).

For more information, please call 761-2582 or visit www.bgcofmanatee.org.

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Mission: To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.