



Thursday 8th October 2009

**Special Olympics Great Britain Launch Viral Campaign
to 'Get Your Mascot Back'**

Special Olympics GB (SOGB), the country's major provider of sporting opportunities for people with learning disabilities, today launched a viral fundraising campaign targeting football fans.

'Get Your Mascot Back' sees Special Olympics GB athletes fake the theft of the Manchester United, Chelsea and Newcastle United mascots with the promise of their return for donations to the charity at <http://www.getyourmascotback.com>. SOGB is calling on football fans to go to the website and make a donation to secure the return of the mascot for the next home fixtures.

Two films were shot with each mascot. One shows the theft occurring and the other shows the mascot being held captive. The aim of the campaign is to grab fan's attention with a light-hearted campaign that encourages donations to the sports charity.

Newcastle United defender, Stephen Taylor commented: "Magpie fans we need your help - Monty the Magpie has been stolen and is being held to ransom. We can't play without him!"

SOGB support 8,000 children and adults with sports training and competition. The money raised will help to provide more sporting opportunities and expand the programme to reach more people with learning disabilities across the country.

For more information on Special Olympics GB, please visit <http://www.sogb.org.uk>

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Notes to editors:

Special Olympics Great Britain is the country's largest provider of a year-round sports training and competition programme for all people with learning disabilities giving every individual the opportunity to take part, train and compete in a variety of 23 Olympic-type sports**. The charity enables each participant to develop skills, believe in themselves and be active members of their communities. A learning disability is a life-long mental disability. It affects an individual's capacity to communicate effectively, learn new information and adopt new skills.

In Great Britain there are an estimated 1.2 million people with a learning disability. When you consider families, friends and carers, the total *footprint* of those affected is near up to 12 million people. 200 babies will be born this week with a learning disability. They will face discrimination all their life.

Special Olympics and Paralympics are two separate organisations. Special Olympics are recognized as the third member of the Olympic family, but it is not just a sporting event, it is for all people with learning disabilities between the ages of 6 to 80 with an IQ of 70 or less. Paralympics provides elite-only level competition for multi-disabled groups including physical, blind and deaf.

Special Olympics Great Britain was established in 1978 and has nearly 8,000 athletes in 135 groups in England, Scotland and Wales run by a dedicated army of over 2600 volunteers that act in a wide variety of roles from sport coaches to fundraisers. They are supported by a small staff team at the London head office.

The global Special Olympics Movement got its start in 1968 when Eunice Kennedy Shriver (President John F. Kennedy's sister) started a day camp for people with learning disabilities at her home in America. The movement grew beyond her home and today Special Olympics is in 170 countries with over 2.25 million athletes.

Special Olympics Great Britain's Chairman is Lawrie McMenemy MBE. Special Olympics Great Britain's first sports Ambassador was Olympic Gold Medalist Lord Sebastian Coe. Our current Ambassadors include: England and Portsmouth FC goalkeeper David James, Olympic Champions Darren Campbell MBE and Katharine Merry, England Women's Football Coach Hope Powell, Tennis legend Mark Cox, NBA superstar John Amaechi, British Ski Champion and BBC-TV presenter Graham Bell, World and Olympic Champion Canoeist Anna Hemmings, Extreme Kayaker Shaun Baker and SOGB athletes Georgina Hulme and Moira Brown, as well as TV personalities Armand Beasley, Tina Baker and Shobna Gulati.