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Olympic Swimmers Inspire Local Children to Swim Big

Asphalt Green Makes A Splash With 14th Annual Big Swim[®] Free Youth Swim Meet & Fundraiser

NEW YORK, March 3, 2009 – Asphalt Green and Olympic swimmers like triple gold medalist and “Voice of Swimming” Rowdy Gaines hope to inspire local school children to take a more active interest in swimming by participating in the not-for-profit organization’s 14th annual Big Swim[®] on Saturday, April 25, 2009. The all-day free swim meet is open to swimmers ages 6-16 who are not already part of a swim team. It will be held at Asphalt Green’s AquaCenter, home of the only publicly accessible 50-meter Olympic standard pool in Manhattan.

Each child participating in the Big Swim experiences the excitement of a real race with starting blocks, officials, and a timed finish. The children are met at the finish by Olympians, who will include Maritza Correia, Nikki Dryden, Rowdy Gaines, Margie Pedder, Konstantin Petrov, Mark Ruiz, Shannon Shakespeare, Rebecca Soni, and Kendra Zanutto along with world-class divers Bryan Gillooly and Chris Mantilla. Simply by participating, everyone is a winner at the Big Swim, taking home a medal, T-shirt, swim cap, goody bag, and memories of an exhilarating day of fun competition.

In addition to giving children a chance to experience the thrill of participating in a swim meet, the event will include swim demonstrations by Rowdy Gaines and other Olympians as well as a luncheon to raise funds for Asphalt Green’s *Waterproofing* program, which has taught almost 30,000 New York City public school children how to swim – free of charge – since 1993. An anticipated 1,000 children – many of whom learned to swim through Asphalt Green’s *Waterproofing* program – will participate in this year’s Big Swim.

“The disproportionate rates of drowning among minorities is deeply troubling. African-American children drown at more than three times the rate of white children. This problem is aggravated in New York City by the limited number of swimming facilities,” noted Carol Tweedy, Executive Director of Asphalt Green. “Our *Waterproofing* program gives these children access to a world-class pool and teaches them how to swim – which is not only an important life skill but also a healthy athletic activity that they can participate in for years to come.”

As part of the Big Swim, Asphalt Green will be hosting the Big Swim Benefit to raise funds for the *Waterproofing* program. The benefit will be a family friendly luncheon during which guests will enjoy an exclusive opportunity to take pictures with and get autographs from the Olympians. They will also have VIP seating for the special Olympic exhibition featuring *Waterproofing* students during the Big Swim meet.

To register your child to participate in the Big Swim, call 646.981.2370 or visit www.asphaltgreen.org/BigSwim. The site also has information on how to become a Big Swim volunteer for the day. Deadline for applications is April 15, 2009. To buy tickets to the Big Swim Benefit and get VIP seating for the event, call 646.981.2232 or visit www.asphaltgreen.org/BigSwim. All events will be held at Asphalt Green's AquaCenter, located at 91st Street & York Avenue.

Asphalt Green

Founded in 1975, Asphalt Green is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to assisting individuals of all ages and backgrounds pursue sports and fitness as a life-long activity. Situated on a beautiful 5½-acre Upper East Side campus, it is New York City's premier athletic complex – acknowledged for its unparalleled sports and fitness programs for all ages and athletic levels – and a valuable resource to the surrounding communities. For more information on Asphalt Green and its programs, visit www.asphaltgreen.org.

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