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Making a world of difference in a world of facial differences

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOCAL CHARITY SUPPORTS CHILDREN BORN WITH CLEFT LIP/PALATE
Las Vegas-Based Organizations Share \$255,000 in Funding from Speedway Children's Charities

Las Vegas, NV – Among the non-profit organizations sharing \$255,000 in funding from the Las Vegas Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities is a local group focused on helping children born with cleft lip and palate, the most common birth defect in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"AmeriFace is thrilled to have been selected during this year's grant cycle," said Debbie Oliver, executive director of the charity and founder of its largest, most active program, cleftAdvocate. "Speedway Children's Charities continues to be an outstanding partner here in Southern Nevada."

Radio talent Steph MacKenzie of 97.1 The Point presented leaders of 44 local organizations with checks totaling more than a quarter-million dollars during last night's annual tree-lighting ceremony at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. Families enjoyed a kid-friendly buffet, balloon artists and a visit with Santa. The Speedway also treated grant recipients to a tour of the Gift of Lights, sponsored by US Bank and organized by Meehan and Associates.

The grant committee reviewed more than 200 applications this year. Additional recipients include The Lullaby Connection, Assistance League of Las Vegas, and the Goodie Two Shoes Foundation.

"Our fundraising efforts are focused on benefitting youth organizations right here in Southern Nevada," said Rachel Commeford, director of Speedway Children's Charities' local chapter. Grant funds must be used for the direct benefit of children, and not for salaries, administrative costs or equipment, she said.

"Naturally, NASCAR weekend is a huge opportunity to raise money and awareness for these exceptional causes," said Commeford, "but we also encourage supporters to join us throughout the year at our poker and golf tournaments, celebrity experiences and other special events."

One in every 600 babies born in the United States is born with an orofacial cleft. The most common of these anomalies is cleft lip and palate. A cleft occurs when sections of the upper lip and/or roof of the mouth do not fuse during early development of the fetus, leaving a large gap in the bone and tissue requiring reconstructive surgery over a period of many years.

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“My daughter was born with a cleft 23 years ago,” said Oliver, the mother of six who heads up the charity from her northwest valley home. “We work hard to provide the kind of support that was lacking when our daughter was young.” Project coordinators are excited about the variety of educational and support opportunities the SCC grant will help sustain.

Programs of AmeriFace have been featured in local and national media, but Oliver said there's plenty more work to be done. “Increased public awareness is one of those goals.”

“In 2011 we'll celebrate 20 years of support to the cleft/craniofacial community,” she said of the all-volunteer organization. “We couldn't do it without the support of the Las Vegas community.

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About AmeriFace

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The mission of AmeriFace is to provide information and emotional support to individuals with facial differences and their families and increase public understanding through awareness programs and education on behalf of those we serve. We support individuals whose facial differences are present at birth, as well as those who have acquired facial differences as a result of illness, disease or trauma, such as stroke, cancer, accident and burns. Learn more at www.AmeriFace.org or call toll-free (888) 486-1209; local (702) 769-9264. **AmeriFace is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity (#32-0085490).**

About Speedway Children's Charities Las Vegas Chapter

Since 1999, the Las Vegas Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities has distributed \$1.7 million in funding to children's organizations in the southern Nevada area surrounding the Las Vegas Motor Speedway. The funds distributed by Speedway Children's Charities are raised through special events held throughout the year. Some of the annual events include the NASCAR Driver Auction, Mel Larson Night of Champions, Golf Tournament, NHRA "Cards for Kids" Poker Tournament, and WNFR Celebrity Bowling Tournament. Learn more at <http://lasvegas.speedwaycharities.org> or call (702) 632-8242.

Documents and photos are available for this release.