

2008 Olympians Open Their “Hearts Of Gold” To Help Others

(NAPSA)—For 17 days this summer, the world will stand up and cheer for the athletic skill of 10,500 men and women from 205 countries as they go for the gold at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. But after the ceremonies are over and the medals are handed out, many of the athletes will want to continue to live the Olympic values and share the spirit of the Olympic Games.

“Becoming an Olympian is a life-changing event for an athlete and a wonderful opportunity to inspire others,” says Natalie Coughlin, who hopes to become the first woman in Olympic history to successfully defend the gold medal in the 100m backstroke. “The Olympic Movement is about much more than sports. It’s about living the values of dedication and teamwork and reaching out to others in one’s own community and around the world. It’s like the way the Olympic flame passes from torch to torch—one act of caring can inspire another.” With her keen understanding of what it means to be an Olympian, it’s no surprise Coughlin was just named as one of the captains for the 2008 USA Swim Team heading to Beijing.

When she is not training, Coughlin reaches out and gives back to her community in Northern California, where she supports several nonprofit organizations that fight obesity and encourage kids to stay physically active.

This summer, Coughlin is also working with other Olympians and Johnson & Johnson to introduce Hearts of Gold, a program that will enable and inspire Beijing Olympians to engage in acts of kindness, caring and encouragement.

Specifically, the Johnson & Johnson Hearts of Gold program will help support the international humanitarian organization Right To Play. Backed by a team of top athletes from over 40 countries, Right To Play uses sport and play to bring about positive social change for children and communities around the world that have been affected by war, poverty and disease.

“The idea is to energize as many Olympians as possible to share the spirit of the Olympic Games beyond the 17 days of competition,” Coughlin says.

One way the Olympians in-



photo credit: USA Swimming

Five-time Olympic medalist Natalie Coughlin will aim to add to her gold medal collection in Beijing—and also share her Heart of Gold with others.

involved in Hearts of Gold are helping Right To Play is by doing what they do best: winning a medal. For every medal an Athlete Ambassador wins at the Beijing 2008 Games, the program will donate money to the organization, so the athletes’ personal victories also become a win for children in need.

The Hearts of Gold program will also honor every Beijing Olympian with an exclusive gift that symbolizes the positive impact caring for others can have. The gift has been specially designed to commemorate one’s role as an Olympian and to share as a “thank-you” with someone who supported the athlete’s Olympic journey.

The program is also underwriting five full-time fellowships with Right To Play so that Olympians can learn firsthand what giving back is all about. The athletes will work in one of Right To Play’s offices as well as with children in a disadvantaged part of the world. “Every athlete dreams of reaching the top of his or her sport—to make the Olympic team and possibly even win a medal,” Coughlin notes. “And with the honor of becoming an Olympian also comes the opportunity to do more, to use the role to help others. That opportunity can last a lifetime.”

For more information, visit www.jnj.com.cn/olympics/en.