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## **LOS ANGELES SPARKS & FARMERS INSURANCE PARTNER WITH FRIENDS OF WEST LOS ANGELES FOR FIRST ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. MEMORIAL GAMES JANUARY 16TH & 17TH**

*Westwood and Denker Recreation Centers to Participate in Inaugural Games*

**LOS ANGELES** – The Los Angeles Sparks and Farmers Insurance have teamed up with Friends of West Los Angeles to present the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Games. This marks the first year of the Games and their purpose is not only to recognize the legacy of Dr. King but to bring people together for one common goal – to give kids in Los Angeles the chance to play sports.

In an effort to combat the recent budget cuts that have taken sports out of schools in the Los Angeles community and left many kids with no form of extracurricular activity, the Sparks and Farmers Insurance will give kids the opportunity to continue playing basketball through the Westwood and Denker Recreation Centers. Each of the 100 kids in attendance will play two games and receive a uniform courtesy of Farmers Insurance to wear during their games and over the course of both days.

"We are thrilled to be involved in such a meaningful event," said Sparks President Kristin Bernert. "We are celebrating a great man in Dr. King, but we are also standing behind our shared belief that each and every child in Los Angeles deserves the opportunity to play sports in a safe and healthy environment."

The Memorial Games will tip-off on Saturday at 10am at the Denker Recreation Center with a program that will feature Councilman Bernard C. Parks from District Eight, James Goodman with Friends of West Los Angeles and Sparks President Kristin Bernert. The Games will conclude on Sunday at the Westwood Recreation Center after a program that will feature in addition to the names above, Councilman Paul Koretz from District Five. The kids will compete in games throughout both days on combined teams of both Denker and Westwood participants in the spirit of Dr. King.

"The event this weekend is being held to bring together two recreation centers from two different areas of Los Angeles to celebrate and recognize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy through sports," said James Goodman from Friends of West Los Angeles. "We are partnering with the Sparks and Farmers insurance because they have a commitment to ensuring that kids from all over the city have the opportunity to engage in sports."

The first annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Games are a continuation of an ongoing partnership between the Sparks and Friends of West Los Angeles. In 2009, the Sparks held a Westwood Recreation Center Night during a home game to recognize the Center and its participants and in August, Sparks Olympian Tina Thompson was on hand to speak to the kids and sign autographs as they unveiled a brand new, refurbished basketball court at the Westwood Recreation Center.

The Memorial Games are being held on Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at the Denker Recreation Center and Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at Westwood Recreation Center. For more information on how you can be

involved please contact the Westwood Recreation Center at 310-473-3610.

**About the Los Angeles Sparks**

The Los Angeles Sparks are entering their 14th season in the Women's National Basketball Association. The Sparks are one of the five original teams still operating in the WNBA. In December 2006, the Sparks were purchased by a group of investors, led by Carla Christofferson and Kathy Goodman and they are one of six WNBA teams owned and operated independent of NBA teams. The Sparks won back-to-back WNBA Championships in 2001 & 2002. The team's roster of star athletes is led by three Olympians including 2008 WNBA MVP & Rookie of the Year Candace Parker, All-Star DeLisha Milton-Jones and four-time WNBA Champion Tina Thompson. The Sparks play their home games at STAPLES Center in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. For Sparks' ticket information, call 1-877-44-SPARKS.