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Indian National Finals Rodeo

Ready-for-Release #8 --- DIABETES AWARENESS

Each one, reach one. The Indian National Finals Rodeo is taking advantage of its captive audience, spectators and participants alike, inside the arena and out, to promote health awareness among Native American people. "Diabetes disproportionately affects Native Americans and INFR commissioners and staff are trying to get the message out to rodeo fans and athletes affected by this disease," says program coordinator Dr. Steve Williamson (Blackfoot).

"We are committed to taking a leadership role for advocacy and education within the INFR community and are asking for support to disseminate that message. Our ultimate Diabetes Awareness campaign goal is first and foremost --- awareness --- but we also focus on prevention and treatment to reduce the incidence and effects of diabetes in Native Americans both in, and around, the rodeo arena.

"What we're hoping to do is to get information out to Native Americans (and non-Natives too) about diabetes. You can never tell that story too often, especially when the disease affects Native Americans in such a disproportionate manner with such a devastating effect on both patients and their families."

As part of the 39th annual Indian National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas (November 4-8), November 7th has been declared **INFR Diabetes Awareness Day**, sponsored by Novo Nordisk. "We get started with a brisk walk at 8am, followed by a 10:30 am Booty Shake Brunch fundraising event at the South Point Hotel and Casino Exhibit Hall. INFR Team Roping Champion Derrick Begay, PRCA World Champion Steer Wrestler Luke Branquinho, and future champion Brandon Cole will be guest speakers. Branquinho, a 4 time world champion currently ranked #3 in the world, speaks from personal experience as a Type 1 diabetic. The cowboys will help announce the winners of the 2014 diabetes poster competition among young artists from age Headstart to 12th grade."

At 2pm, the INFR Diabetes Benefit and Fashion Show gets underway at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip. Veteran movie/TV actor Gary Farmer (Cayuga Nation) will host, assisted by fellow actor Adam Beach. "Some other sports/entertainer/actor big names are also being lined up to speak at the fashion show," says Williamson. Darlene Perkins of Red Lightning Couture says some of the models from the fashion show will also attend that evening's Go Round buckle ceremony.

Winners of the All Around Cowboy and Cowgirl get to show off their Proud to Wear Purple shirts in recognition of their hard work and dedication to the Indian Rodeo Diabetes Awareness events. The campaign will have a booth set up on the concourse throughout the week of championship events where rodeo athletes and attendees can get their blood sugar and blood pressure checked.

“It’s taken a couple of years and a lot of leg work and word-of-mouth promotion, but we’re becoming a more noticeable part of the rodeo activities,” says Williamson. “The Bootie Shake Brunch will be a key part of our effort --- free admission, diabetes-friendly food, silent and live auctions --- the sky’s the limit. We’d love to get to a point where we can start an endowment to fund our yearly diabetes awareness campaign, growing even larger each year to get the word out to more people that this is a disease that can be prevented and/or managed --- and awareness is the key.”

Photo: Red Lightning Couture outfit

