



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF CLEVELAND**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Smith
216.883.2106 x238
lsmith@clevekids.org

**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CLEVELAND JOINS DENZEL WASHINGTON IN URGING ALL
AMERICANS TO BE GREAT**

*Denzel Washington and Boys & Girls Clubs Across the Nation Launch Campaign
to Help Youth Reach Their Full Potential*

Cleveland, OH – January 6, 2009 -- America's youth need your help. From academic failure and gang violence to poverty, drugs and obesity, they face a daunting array of problems with serious consequences and fewer safety nets at home and in the community.

To address these issues, Boys & Girls Clubs <of Your Town> is joining a new integrated advocacy campaign called BE GREAT, led by national spokesperson and Academy Award-winning actor, Denzel Washington.

Other Club alumni joining Washington in the BE GREAT campaign include: Muhammad Ali, Swin Cash, Bill Clinton, Bill Cosby, Cuba Gooding Jr., Michael Jordan, Queen Latifah, Mario Lopez, John Mellencamp, Edward James Olmos, Smokey Robinson, John Singleton, Ruben Studdard, Usher, Courtney Vance, Mark Wahlberg and Kerry Washington.

"As someone whose life was changed dramatically by a Boys & Girls Club, I can think of no better organization to lead the country in addressing the pressing needs of today's young people," said Washington. "I also believe that as adults, we must assume responsibility for many of the conditions that are preventing our young people from achieving their full potential."

The BE GREAT campaign was developed after Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) conducted an online survey of more than 1,100 teens earlier this year in which 33 percent said that academic failure is the top issue facing America. In the survey, another 67 percent reported knowing someone who had dropped out of high school. In March 2008, BGCA hosted a national Teen Town Hall meeting in Los Angeles, where young Americans (20 percent) expressed concern about the rising level of teen pregnancy and 22 percent reported knowing students who regularly carry weapons to school.

In response, Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland urges parents, community leaders and all residents to:

- Get involved in the life of a child by volunteering, serving on a local board or financially supporting local Boys & Girls Clubs.
- Ask elected officials to call attention to the issues affecting young people and to direct more partnerships and resources toward solutions.
- Reconnect and re-engage as alumni with community organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs that impacted their lives as youth.
- Host a youth forum to hear the concerns and issues of the young people in our community.

Visit www.be-great.org to find useful resources and compelling stories about the diverse lives touched by Boys & Girls Clubs. Young people and their parents may also drop by Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland to learn more about our programs and activities. We are located at in five locations throughout Cleveland; please visit our website at www.clevekids.org for locations. Our doors are open from 2:30-7:30pm.

America needs to make our young people a priority. Kids and teens need a safe, supervised and structured environment during the critical after-school hours.

Help us help kids BE GREAT. Together we can make a difference.

About Boys & Girls Clubs Cleveland

Boys & Girls Cleveland serves some 3,500 young people, ages 6-18, annually through educational, recreational, health and fitness programs. Known as The Positive Place for Kids, Boys & Girls Clubs Cleveland provides a safe place to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals, life enhancing programs, character development experiences and hope and opportunity to the youth we serve. Learn more at www.clevekids.org.

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