



**For Immediate Release**

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**National Basketball Referees Foundation Inaugural Conference Draws  
Sports, Political, Philanthropic Stakeholders**

*Washington, D.C. – September 15, 2006* – The National Basketball Referees Foundation (NBRF), the charitable and educational organization of the NBA referees, held its historic first conference last weekend in Chicago – drawing together officials and other major stakeholders from basketball, politics and philanthropy.

“Never before have so many luminaries, from so many disciplines, all come together in one place to honor basketball officiating as they did last weekend.” said Lamell McMorris, Executive Director of the NBRF. “It shows the type of support that the referees are able to garner for the causes that they care so deeply about.”

Chicago’s Mayor Richard M. Daley helped kick off the events on Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, partnering with the Foundation for an after-school mini-clinic at the city’s Englewood High School. There, the referees introduced student athletes to alternative careers in the field of athletics. On Friday, the officials also spent time at LaRabida Children’s Hospital, where they visited with patients and handed out gifts donated by Nickelodeon.

Panel discussions officially began on Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Chicago, with two sessions on tradecraft. NBA referee Joey Crawford presented a two-hour seminar on play-calling, followed by a panel on the same subject moderated by his colleague Bob Delaney to the audience of approximately 70 league, collegiate and high school referees.

That night, the NBRF held its first awards dinner and gala. Leah Hope of Chicago’s ABC 7 hosted the evening, which included a keynote address by U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson, remarks from sporting and philanthropic leaders, and donations to Focus on the Future Youth Development Agency and LaRabida Children’s Hospital. Retired refereeing greats Wally Rooney and Lee Jones were given awards for their contributions to the craft. Musical entertainment was provided by Caesars Palace jazz quartet Ghalib Ghallab and the Whitney Young High School Choir.

Sunday, September 10, began with a panel of professional referees discussing career paths and how they worked their way to the league. Later sessions focused on improving on-court relationships between coaches, players, and officials, and included Doug Collins, a TNT Analyst and former player and coach, and NBA Player Antonio Davis.

At Sunday's luncheon, keynote speaker Rev. Jesse Jackson exhorted the crowd to consider the power of unity. The event also featured Washington D.C.-based jazz singer Lyzz Adams, and remarks by NBRF Board member William Lowry, who is senior advisor to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Whitney Young High School students Franklin Thompson and Taryn Randle emceed the luncheon, and at the end, were surprised by NBA referees Violet Palmer and Joe DeRosa, who presented them with \$500 scholarships for their academic achievements.

The last session of the day featured major sportswriters Phil Jasner of the Philadelphia Daily News, The Chicago Tribune's Sam Smith, Roscoe Nance of USA Today, Scott Soshnick of Bloomberg News, and moderator Steve Aschburner of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Each gave their own take on how they see the game, and the referees.

"Overall, the event was a resounding success, and has paved the way for an even stronger Conference in 2007," the NBRF's McMorris said.

#### **About the NBRF**

The NBRF is a registered 501(c)(3) organization established by the NBA referees to support and enhance their charitable, educational and community activities.

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