



**For Immediate Release** – 12 December 2007

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Deaf Christy from Survivor inspires Aussie deaf children**

Christy Smith, contestant on the popular American TV reality show, *Survivor* screened on Channel 9 will be visiting deaf and hearing impaired children at Deaf Children Australia today, **Wednesday 12 December at 11am at 597 St Kilda Road**.

Voted most popular by US viewers from all previous *Survivor* challengers, Christy Smith from Colorado was the first ever deaf contestant in the *Survivor: The Amazon* series in 2003. Her primary motive for being on *Survivor* was to promote awareness for the deaf.

Today Christy will speak to deaf and hearing impaired children and their families about her own personal experience of deafness and about the importance of breaking down barriers between deaf and hearing people.

Christy is deaf, can hear only very minimal sounds with the help of a hearing aid and relies on lip-reading skills.

Christy's mission in life has always been to provide awareness of deafness and help bridge the gap between deaf and hearing people. Christy's motto is 'Challenge yourself' and she is currently travelling the world inspiring deaf people that they can be, do, have anything they want in this world with a bit of determination and persistence.

There are 16,090 deaf and hearing impaired children under 21 in Australia. Approx. 95% of deaf and hearing impaired children are born to hearing families who have little or no experience of deafness. More than 83% of these children attend mainstream schools where they suffer a critical shortage of specialist support. Many struggle with issues of isolation and being bullied due to being different from their hearing peers.

The CEO of Deaf Children Australia, Damian Lacey says: "Our vision at Deaf Children Australia is that deafness is no barrier. Christy's visit will encourage deaf and hearing impaired children to break through barriers they experience in life and achieve what they want in this world."

Deaf Children Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation representing the needs of 16,000 deaf and hearing impaired children and their families across Australia and has been enriching their lives for over 140 years.

**For more information on Deaf Children Australia, please call 1800 645 956 or visit [www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au).**

#### **Media enquiries**

**Julie Postance**  
Tel: (03) 9539 5362

**Mob: 0400 197 616**  
**Email: [jpostance@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:jpostance@deafchildren.org.au)**

**Street:**  
597 St Kilda Road,  
Melbourne, VIC 3004

**Postal:**  
PO Box 6466,  
St Kilda Road Central,  
Melbourne, VIC 8008

**Tel:** + 61 3 9539 5300  
**Fax:** +61 3 9525 2595  
**TTY:** +61 3 9510 7143  
**Helpline:** 1800 645 916  
[info@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:info@deafchildren.org.au)  
[www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au)

ACN 108 025 207 ABN 57 108 025 207

## Notes to editors

Christy is currently on a world trip with sign language interpreter, Dave Justice, visiting deaf people and documenting her experiences for 'Discovering Deaf Worlds' for a film documentary. They plan to meet with community leaders, organisations, and youth from New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China, Thailand, India, Nepal and Kenya.

Their goal is to gain a better understanding of a variety of cultures worldwide, and share the experiences they bring from the United States. They will be capturing traditional stories of native Deaf signers, interviewing deaf leaders on current issues in their communities, living the adventures each country has to offer, and creating possibilities along the way.

From Aspen, Colorado, Christy grew up with a determination to succeed in the hearing community. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in sociology and criminology from Gallaudet University. Christy gives motivational speeches to encourage others to challenge themselves and make a difference in the world.

She has travelled to Costa Rica and spent 50 days on a wilderness adventure trip in Alaska with Outward Bound. She describes herself as succulent, independent and goal-oriented. She is most proud of the time she has spent working with juvenile delinquents where she taught them how to work in groups to develop growth and self esteem.

Christy shocked her Survivor tribe members on the first day when she announced that she was deaf. Initially she struggled, but later found her strength and earned the favour of the audience. She also earned sympathy due to the general meanness of the 'hot girls' Jenna and Heidi, who excluded Christy and eventually 'backstabbed' her out of the game. On day 33 of the show, Christy was voted out and came in sixth place. She became the fourth member of the jury of seven that would ultimately vote for the winner of the show.