

For Immediate Release – 27 October 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

Dance star, Demi hosts 'Dance off for Deaf Kids' during National Deaf Week

Much loved finalist from Australia's hit TV show *So you think you can dance* Demi Sorono and her sister deaf dancer, Lorraine Sorono taught over 100 excited deaf and hard of hearing kids how to dance in a '**Dance off for Deaf Kids**' on Saturday 18 October at Deaf Children Australia on St Kilda Road, Melbourne for **The National Week of Deaf People**.

While most of these kids were unable to hear the words to the songs, they could feel the music vibrations and memorised the steps they were taught using beats to match the music.

The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of deafness in the community during The National Week of Deaf People, which fell between 11 and 17 October 2008 this year.

Demi - who won hearts all over Australia for her talent as a young female street dancer and hip hop performer - moved Australian audiences by signing in Auslan to her deaf sister, Lorraine during the show. Lorraine, herself a gifted dancer, had auditioned for the show but did not make it through the heats because the judges believed she would have difficulty learning new choreography because she was deaf.

Having no knowledge of sign language, Lorraine was unable to communicate with her family until she moved to Australia in 1987. Dancing became her way of expressing herself.

The CEO of Deaf Children Australia, Damian Lacey says: "Our vision at Deaf Children Australia is 'A life to be lived – deaf people empowered, connected and achieving.' Demi and Lorraine gave much joy to deaf kids while helping to raise the profile of deafness, which often ranks at the bottom of the disability ladder because it is hidden."

It is a widely held misconception that a cochlear implants cure deafness however, a cochlear is suitable for just a small percentage of deaf children. More than 90% of deaf children grow up in families with little or no experience of deafness and most attend mainstream schools where they suffer a massive shortage of support. Many deaf children suffer chronic isolation both in and outside of the home and therefore suffer a greater risk of mental health needs than their hearing peers.

Deaf Children Australia has been providing information, advocacy, support services and educational resources to enrich the lives of deaf and hard of hearing children and young adults for 146 years. Deaf Children Australia represents the needs of 16,000 deaf and hearing impaired children throughout Australia. As a not-for-profit organisation, their service is made possible with the support of volunteers, the community, businesses and government financial grants.

For more information on Deaf Children Australia, please call 1800 645 916 or log on to www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au.

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