



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 14, 2014

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ACT Today! Hosts 9th Annual Denim & Diamonds for Autism

Star-studded event to be held October 19, 2014 in Westlake Village, CA

ACT Today! announces its 9th Annual Denim & Diamonds for Autism will be held on October 19, 2014 in Westlake Village, Calif., benefiting children with autism and honoring actress Holly Robinson Peete, actor Nolan Gould, former NFL quarterback Rodney Peete, singer/songwriter Sophie Rose and philanthropist Virginia Viola.

Westlake Village, Calif. (Oct. 19, 2014) -- ACT Today! (Autism Care and Treatment Today!) announces its highly anticipated 9th Annual Denim & Diamonds for Autism, benefiting children with autism, will be held on Sunday, October 19, 2014 at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village. More than 500 attendees are expected to attend the red carpet gala, including film, television and sports celebrities, the corporate community and other autism supporters.

The red carpet fundraiser will feature a cocktail reception, silent and live auctions, dinner program with surprise celebrity presenters, live entertainment and tribute awards to the 2014 honorees: actress Holly Robinson Peete, former NFL quarterback Rodney Peete, actor Nolan Gould ("Modern Family"), singer/songwriter Sophie Rose and Ventura County, Calif. philanthropist Virginia Viola.

ACT Today! is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide access to care and treatment to children with autism whose families cannot afford the necessary tools their children need to reach their highest potential. Its signature fundraiser, Denim & Diamonds for Autism, is considered one of Southern California's most anticipated non-profit events of the year. Proceeds from the event will provide immediate and direct help to children with autism, including behavioral therapy, medical treatment, assistive technology, assistance dogs, social skills programs, tuition for special needs schools and assistance to military families with children with autism. Since the creation of Denim & Diamonds for Autism, ACT Today! has distributed \$1.5 million in care and treatment.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2014), 1 in every 68 children in America is diagnosed with autism, making it more prevalent than juvenile diabetes, childhood cancer and pediatric AIDS combined, in addition to being the fastest growing disability in America.

"Autism is a serious societal issue and affects all of us," said Nancy Alspaugh-Jackson, ACT Today!'s executive director. "We need to spread autism awareness and encourage others to support agencies that work on behalf of children with autism. We need to make sure that these children obtain the fundamental elements that can improve their quality of life."

The 9th Annual Denim & Diamonds for Autism corporate sponsors (as of July 14, 2014) are: Puritas Organic Gold, Vin Di Bona Productions, Tolman & Wiker Insurance Services, LLC, Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), Aldebaran Robotics, Burbank Printing, City National Bank, Morrie Sage's Universal City Nissan, Isabella Emporium, Westlake Magazine, Private Protective Services, Rage Models, Tito's Handmade Vodka and UnitedHealthcare.

For more information about ACT Today!'s Denim and Diamonds visit: www.denimanddiamondsforautism.net.

About ACT Today!: ACT Today! (Autism Care and Treatment Today!) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to providing resources and funding to families of children with autism who cannot afford or access the necessary tools their children need to reach their full potential. For more information about ACT Today!, visit: www.act-today.org.

About Holly Robinson Peete: Actress, author, talk show host, activist and philanthropist Holly Robinson Peete's career as an actress dates back more than two decades and has led her to becoming a voice for her father, her son, and her community. Robinson Peete recently joined the cast of the hit comedy series "Mike & Molly" shortly after successfully launching the CBS daily talk show "The Talk" as one of the original co-hosts. "The Talk" came on the heels of the enormous success Robinson Peete had on the third season of NBC's "Celebrity Apprentice". In 1997, Robinson Peete and her husband, former NFL quarterback Rodney Peete, formed the HollyRod Foundation, inspired by her father's courageous battle with Parkinson's disease, with the mission to help improve the quality of life of people with Parkinson's. Then, in 2005, inspired by their eldest son's autism diagnosis, HollyRod Foundation's mission expanded to provide support and resources to those affected by autism. Through the HollyRod Foundation and her family's personal experiences, Robinson Peete has become an advocate for consistent and reliable education, outreach and support for both Parkinson's and autism. Her autism advocacy also extends to her book with daughter, Ryan Elizabeth Peete. In 2010, Robinson Peete released her second book, an NAACP Image Award winning children's book about autism from the sibling's perspective, co-authored by 12-year old Elizabeth Peete, entitled "My Brother Charlie" (Scholastic). With her first book "Get Your Own Damn Beer, I'm Watching the Game: A Women's Guide to Loving Pro Football" (2005, Rodale), Robinson Peete won the 2006 Quill Literacy Award. Robinson Peete's first appeared on camera at the age of four, opposite her father, Matthew Robinson, who served as a producer and portrayed the original character of "Gordon" on Sesame Street. In 1986, she starred in the FOX television drama "21 Jump Street" alongside Johnny Depp. She went on to star in many other successful television series including "Hangin' With Mr. Cooper", "For Your Love", and "One on One." Robinson Peete's successful television career places her as one of only a handful of actresses to star in four shows in syndication.



About Rodney Peete: NFL veteran quarterback Rodney Peete, best known for his leadership and a winning attitude, spent 16 successful years in the NFL. His admired position in the public eye has led him to a successful career as sports star, television/radio personality, author and philanthropist. In March 2010, Peete released his first book, "Not My Boy! A Father, a Son, and One Family's Journey with Autism." The story, based on the Peete family's experience raising a child with autism, is published by Hyperion and is currently receiving wide acclaim. "Through Not My Boy!," Peete is giving a voice to an often unheard journey: the father. Influencers from across the country have acknowledged Rodney's brave story of a father coming to terms with his child's autism diagnosis while simultaneously fighting to keep his family intact. Following his NFL career, Peete went on to become a co-host on Fox Sports' "The Best Damn Sports Show Period." In 2008, he and wife, actress Holly Robinson Peete, hosted "Meet the Peetes" on XM Radio's Oprah Radio. "Meet the Peetes" focused on the life of two working parents raising their four children, balancing their careers and being activists and advocates on issues that affected them and their family. Peete is president of HollyRod Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based entertainment and investment firm. Additionally, he is a co-founder of the HollyRod Foundation, an organization established to generate funds to fight Parkinson's Disease, support children suffering from autism, and improve the quality of life for those in need. Peete also serves on the Board of Governors at his alma mater, USC, from where he holds a B.A. and was First Team All-American and 1988 Player of the Year.



About Nolan Gould: Nolan Gould is an actor best known for his role as youngest sibling Luke Dunphy on the ABC sitcom “Modern Family.” Nolan recently wrapped the Civil War drama “Field of Lost Shoes”, starring David Arquette, Lauren Holly, and Tom Skerritt. Other film credits include Max in “The To-Do List,” starring Andy Samberg, Rachel Bilson and Bill Hader, and “Friends with Benefits,” where he played Sam the Magnificent, Justin Timberlake’s budding magician nephew. Gould’s television credits include the starring in the made-for-TV movie “Ghoul” and the live-action hub Original Series “R.L. Stine’s The Haunting Hour.” Nolan is a Boy Scout and active member of Mensa and loves practicing Parkour.



About Sophie Rose: 14-year old singer/songwriter Sophie Rose was born in Los Angeles on Christmas Day, 1999. With perfect pitch, Sophie has been singing almost as long as she’s been talking. Taking her inspiration from Britney, Miley and Taylor, Sophie started guitar lessons at age 9 and began writing songs in earnest – often spending long hours locked in her room writing. She currently has written over 90 songs at her young age. Sophie believes songwriting is a coping mechanism and, for her, it’s a way to express her feelings in a creative and beautiful manner. While she admits to wanting to be a superstar like Taylor Swift, Sophie is equally excited to hear other stars record her songs! Sophie recently signed as the first writer to a publishing joint venture between hit songwriter Ester Dean and Dr. Luke’s Prescription Songs. Sophie is also using her talents to help others by supporting charitable causes including ACT Today! (Autism Care and Treatment Today!) and the American Red Cross. ACT Today! is especially near and dear to her as she has been working with this amazing organization for the last 4 years. She recently co-wrote the song “Firefly” and is donating 100% of her proceeds from each individual download to ACT Today!. The song is available for purchase on iTunes, CD Baby and other digital retailers.



About Virginia Viola: Virginia’s journey through life began in Los Angeles as the only child of an Irish immigrant mother and a WW1 veteran from Colorado. In her youth she worked for Hal Roach Studios making limited appearances in “Our Gang” and “The Little Rascals” movie shorts. At 13, she acquired her business savvy in the family restaurant, due to the untimely death of her father. At 17, she declined a scholarship in mathematics at Stanford University in order to help her mother run the family business. It was in the early WWII years when her course was redirected by a US Naval officer by the name of Ralph Viola that danced his way into her heart. They were married in February of 1944, and landed in Oxnard to start their family and construction company. As the co-founder of Viola Constructors, Inc., she was instrumental in the financial success of the company for 68 years. Together they built many landmark projects in Ventura, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara Counties. They were honored to work extensively with the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Virginia’s aptitude in math allowed her to balance the books of four companies to the penny and fueled her passion to play Bridge. She was an early member of the Ventura County Dance Club and the treasurer of the Assistance League where she was influential in the purchase of the Chapter House in Ventura. She and Ralph were involved with the Contractors State License Board, AGC and other organizations that led them to dinner at the White House under two separate administrations.



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