

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Stars Will Be Shining As Special Talents America Comes to Wentz Concert Hall
on November 5**

Jim Peterik Will Be a Judge and Guest Performer

(Naperville, IL) -- Special Talents America reached for the stars – talented children and adults who love to perform and who happen to have disabilities – and those stars will be shining at Wentz Concert Hall and Fine Arts Center in Naperville, Illinois, on November 5. Participating in a four-state talent competition, these inspiring performers will be joined by celebrity guests and the Chicago Sinfonietta during the event. Jim Peterik will be a judge as well as a guest performer.

The groundbreaking event will spotlight people with disabilities delivering a variety of musical performances featuring song, dance, harp, banjo, and keyboard.

The excitement could be felt and heard across state lines as Jorie Meyer, co-founder of Special Talents America, called hopeful competitors to inform them they had been selected as finalists. Meyer delightedly describes her conversation with Erika Cretens of Gladstone, Michigan. “Erika came to the phone, and as soon as I said, ‘Congratulations!’ she called out to her sister, ‘Emily! We made it! We’re going to Chicago!’”

Nine acts, with a total of 14 contestants, will perform at the unique and inspiring event. Finalists will perform on the main stage of the beautiful concert hall before a live audience.

Finalists Bring Variety of Talent to the Stage

The finalists, chosen from competitors from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, are:

- Dancer Michael Betka of Mount Pleasant, Michigan
- Singer Cory Bollettino of Mount Prospect, Illinois
- Singer Breanna Bogucki of Cary, Illinois
- Singers Emily and Erika Cretens of Gladstone, Michigan
- Singer Christine Honeywell of Vernon Hills, Illinois
- Banjo player/singer Alec Hurtubise of Zionsville, Indiana
- Keyboard player/singer Kari Kinnett of Villa Grove, Illinois
- Harpist Mia Strayer of Cherry Valley, Illinois

- And an Illinois dance group including Michelle Anderson and Kelly Neville of Naperville, Allison Ravn-Hansen and Julia Smarto of Bartlett, and Rachel Giagnorio of Rolling Meadows.

Celebrity Guests Perform Major Hits as Added Bonus

Celebrity guests are playing a major role in Special Talents America. Grammy award-winner [Jim Peterik](#), co-founder of Survivor and The Ides of March, and [Lisa McClowry](#), International Vocalist of the Year nominee, are both involved in the planning and judging of the event. McClowry will also emcee the program and sing “Got to Share This Feeling” and “When It Comes from the Heart” during the competition.

As an extraordinary bonus, three celebrity guests – McClowry, Peterik, and [Fergie Frederiksen](#) of Toto and Trillion fame – will thrill the audience with a post-competition mini-concert. Frederiksen will perform “Follow Your Heart” and “Rosanna.” McClowry will charm everyone with two of her recordings, “Brand New Hallelujah” and “Come Dancing.” And Peterik will bring down the house with “The Search Is Over” and “Eye of the Tiger.” For the first time ever, “Eye of the Tiger” has been arranged for symphony, and the Chicago Sinfonietta will accompany the Grammy-award-winning singer/songwriter.

Event Grows from Local to Regional Competition

Special Talents America has grown out of two extremely successful events created with volunteers and the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association. WDSRA’s Got Talent was held in 2007 at the Comcast studio in Mt. Prospect, and SRA’s Got Talent statewide competition was held in 2010 at North Central College in Naperville. Special Talents America has been expanded again to include competitors from a four-state region – Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Tickets, Time and Location

An hors d’oeuvres reception for all attendees will begin at 5:45 p.m. The talent competition will begin at 7:00 p.m., and the concert featuring the world-renowned entertainers will be held from 9:00 until 10:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$25, \$35, and \$45 and can be purchased by visiting www.specialtalents.org or calling the Wentz Concert Hall box office at 630-637-7469. Wentz Concert Hall and Fine Arts Center is located at 171 E. Chicago Avenue, in Naperville, Illinois, on the campus of North Central College.

If you would like to support Special Talents America, several levels of sponsorship are available. Tax-deductible donations may be made to “Western DuPage Special Recreation Association – Attn: Special Talents America.” WDSRA is a 501 (c) (3) organization.

For more information about the event and for sponsorship information, please visit www.specialtalents.org or contact Jorie Meyer at WDSRA by calling 630-681-0962.

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