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EMEKA OKAFOR LAUNCHES AFRICAN INITIATIVE TO SAVE LIVES

Charlotte Bobcat Star Teams with Safe Blood for Africa Foundation; Pledges to Save 1 Million Lives over 5 Years and Help Raise \$15 Million

Charlotte, NC – Emeka Okafor, 2005 NBA Rookie of the Year and Charlotte Bobcat star, announced today in Washington, DC, the launch of his new **One Million African Lives Initiative (“Million Lives Initiative”)** in partnership with the **Safe Blood for Africa Foundation (SBFA)**. The goal of the initiative is to save 1 million lives in sub-Saharan Africa over the next 5 years by reducing the number of HIV-infected blood transfusions given to patients and increasing number of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors. Okafor chose to partner with the **Safe Blood for Africa Foundation**, a leading international non-profit organization working with 34 sub-Saharan African countries, to help make a sustainable solution to reduce the number of transmission infections of HIV and other blood-borne diseases in Africa.

“In my home country of Nigeria and across the African continent, innocent men, women and children are likely given a death sentence when infected with HIV and other blood-borne diseases through tainted blood transfusions,” said Okafor. “Sadly, as pregnant women and children receive the most blood transfusions they are the groups who most often receive the disease this way. Simply testing the blood from one person before it is given to another can help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and save hundreds and thousands of African lives each year.”

In sub-Saharan Africa, 24.5 million individuals live with HIV/AIDS, accounting for 71% of the estimated worldwide infections. Transfusion caused infections account for approximately 10% of AIDS cases throughout Africa according to the World Health Organization, with the majority of these cases being pregnant women and children suffering from anemia and malaria.

Okafor's launch of the **One Million African Lives Initiative** has been timed to coincide with World AIDS Day, which is December 1, 2006. Excel Sports Management President Jeff Schwartz approached **SBFA** Founder Jeff Busch about involving Emeka with the Safe Blood for Africa Foundation due to his passion and interest in this area. "From the beginning of our conversation, we both felt Emeka would be the ideal spokesperson for the One Million African Lives Initiative given his family ties to Nigeria," said Mr. Busch. "Emeka was immediately taken by this crisis in his homeland and has been actively involved with the Safe Blood for Africa Foundation ever since," said Mr. Schwartz.

HIV test kits are a cost-effective preventative measure against the spread of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over the course of the next five years, the Million Lives Initiative hopes to support the distribution of 10 million test kits to properly trained clinicians in Africa.

"Today, I ask my colleagues at the NBA, and celebrities and citizens around the globe, to join me in this mission," Okafor said. "By coming together as people of all colors and nations, we have the ability to save lives by simply making a donation to support this effort. In the United States, it is a crime to knowingly spread HIV/AIDS infection, yet in Africa we are spreading HIV/AIDS to innocent victims through tainted blood transfusions every day. We need to stop this crime against humanity and save these innocent victims from a potential death sentence. Visit our website, www.onemillionafricanlives.org, and find out how you can be a part of the one the world's best AIDS prevention initiatives."

The **One Million African Lives Initiative**, working with SBFA, will support delivery of test kits, Technical training, clinical education and donor recruitment programs. Safe Blood for Africa has been supported by many organizations including the World Health Organization, the World Bank, Johns Hopkins, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ExxonMobil, USAID, and the CDC.

In 2007, Okafor and other NBA players will embark on a "**Million Lives Tour**" campaign through Nigeria, the Congo, and Angola, countries hard hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The tour will be documented in an effort to further raise public awareness of the tragic human conditions causing this crisis and the results of this initiative thus far.

For more information, log on to www.onemillionafricanlives.org.

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About SBFA

Safe Blood for Africa, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, now works at various levels with 34 sub-Saharan countries offering technical assistance, clinical education and testing supplies.

About Emeka Okafor

In addition to being one of the NBA's most talented young players, Emeka is one of the league's smartest and well-spoken leaders. He not only graduated from the University of Connecticut in 3 years with a 3.8 grade point average in Finance, he did so while leading the University of Connecticut Huskies men's basketball team to a National Championship in 2004. Since being selected second overall in the 2004 NBA draft, Emeka has become the face of the thriving young Charlotte Bobcats franchise. Before entering the NBA, Emeka represented the United States as a member of the bronze medal winning 2004 Olympic Basketball Team.

Lethal on both ends of the court, Emeka's equally adept at beating opponents with a low-post move or a mid-range jumper as he is at defending the leagues best scorers. A rebounding machine, both offensive and defensive, Emeka had more consecutive double doubles in his rookie season than any player since 1969.