U.S. Men's National Soccer Team 'Kicks Off' Olive Garden's Pasta For Pennies Program; Fundraiser Benefits The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

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Members of the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team set their sights on a new goal this week when they kicked off Olive Garden's Pasta For Pennies program benefiting The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20021220/OLIVEGARDENLOGO http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20030205/FLW015 )

Teammates DaMarcus Beasley and Carlos Bocanegra of the Chicago Fire, Nick Rimando of the D.C. United and Dan Califf of the Los Angeles Galaxy got the ball rolling for more than one million students in schools around the country who, during a three-week period between January and April, will bring spare change to their classrooms to benefit the local chapters of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The class in each school raising the most money receives a pasta party from Olive Garden.

"Olive Garden is committed to community service and we are proud of the students and educators that join us in the Pasta For Pennies campaign every year," said Jane Diange, senior vice president for the Orlando division of Olive Garden, who participated in the kick-off. "They are leading the fight against leukemia and lymphoma in their very own communities."

Since 1994, Pasta For Pennies has raised more than $15 million to fight leukemia and lymphoma and to provide aid to patients and their families.

"Each year, students, teachers and parents come together in our community to support Olive Garden's Pasta For Pennies program," said Gregory A. Elfers, senior vice president of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. "And, thanks to Olive Garden, DaMarcus, Carlos, Nick and Dan, we begin the program with a real 'kick.' Working together as a team, we can reach our ultimate goal of finding a cure for leukemia and blood-related cancers."

Nearly 300 Americans a day are diagnosed with leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma. An estimated 640,000 people in the United States are presently living with one or more of these diseases. Leukemia is the number one disease killer of children ages 1 to 14 and strikes 10 times as many adults. Leukemia and lymphomas are the leading fatal cancers in young men and women under the age of 35.

For additional information, contact the national office of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society at (800) 955-4572 or visit www.leukemia-lymphoma.org.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with 507 restaurants, more than 60,000 employees and $1.9 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest casual dining company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's Web site at www.olivegarden.com.

SOURCE Olive Garden Italian Restaurant

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