

Public Officials, War Heroes and a Movie Star Named as Race Officials for 2012 Coca-Cola 600, Nation's Largest Memorial Day Celebration

May 10, 2012

- **WV Governor Earl Ray Tomblin named Grand Marshal of Coca-Cola 600**
- **Former Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory named Honorary Starter**
- **Col. Gregory Gadson will give 'Gentlemen Start Your Engines' Command**
- **Battleship Star Brooklyn Decker named Honorary Race Director**

CHARLOTTE, N.C.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May. 10, 2012-- One governor and one governor-hopeful, a military hero and a Hollywood star will be on hand for the nation's largest Memorial Day celebration as they serve as race officials for the 2012 Coca-Cola 600. West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin will be Grand Marshal, North Carolina gubernatorial candidate Pat McCrory will serve as Honorary Starter, Col. Gregory Gadson will give the race command, and *Battleship* star and Charlotte native Brooklyn Decker will be Honorary Race Director for the 53rd running of NASCAR's only 600-mile race at the famed Charlotte Motor Speedway on Sunday, May 27.

"We are honored to have such distinguished public servants, a military hero and Charlotte's own Brooklyn Decker acting as race officials for the 2012 Coca-Cola 600," said Lauren C. Steele, senior vice president, corporate affairs, Coca-Cola Consolidated. "It is great that these state leaders will be on hand to pay tribute to America's servicemen and women at the largest Memorial Day celebration in the nation. We are also excited about having Charlotte native Brooklyn Decker, star of the upcoming movie, *Battleship*, and Col. Gregory Gadson serve as Honorary Race Director and giver of the race command."

As race officials, Tomblin and McCrory will be honored at a pre-race event, attend the official drivers meeting, address the crowd of 140,000 fans, participate in the pre-race spectacular and present the trophy to the winning driver in Victory Lane. As Grand Marshal, Governor Tomblin will lead off the pack of drivers in the official pace car, while governor-hopeful McCrory will wave the green flag over the 43-car field to start NASCAR's most challenging race. As Honorary Race Commander, Col. Gadson will give the command "gentleman start your engines" and as Honorary Race Director, Miss Decker, will ride in an official pace car.

Earl Ray Tomblin is West Virginia's 35th governor. A native of Logan County, he is a graduate of West Virginia University and earned an MBA from Marshall University. A businessman and former teacher, he served in the West Virginia House of Delegates and in the State Senate before becoming governor in 2010. He is married to Joanne Jaeger Tomblin and they have one son, Brent.

Pat McCrory won the Republican nomination for governor of North Carolina earlier this week. Pat is a native of Guilford County, but became well known as the longest serving mayor in Charlotte history. During his 14 years as mayor, Charlotte experienced unprecedented growth and has become a major metropolitan center. In addition, as mayor, McCrory was instrumental in the explosive growth of NASCAR in the Charlotte region. He worked for many years at Duke Energy and is now with the firm of Moore & Van Allen. He is a graduate of Catawba College and he and his wife, Ann, live in Charlotte.

A highly decorated colonel, Director of the Army Wounded Warrior Program and Garrison Commander of Ft. Belvoir, Gregory Gadson commanded the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery in Iraq. He's served in every major conflict of the last two decades, including Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Operation Joint Forge, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. His awards include the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal, to name only a few. He also received the 2008 Hero of the Year Award from *Reader's Digest*, the 2010 NCAA Inspirational Award, and the 2011 American Legion Patriot Award. In addition to still being an active officer in the U.S. Army, he recently completed a master's degree in policy management from Georgetown University and a fellowship at The Institute of World Politics.

Brooklyn Decker, supermodel and movie star, was discovered in a Charlotte shopping mall as a teenager and began her successful modeling career which culminated in being featured on the cover of the 2010 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition. Decker has made guest appearances on hit shows such as NBC's *Chuck* and USA Network's *Royal Pains*. In 2011, Decker was cast the female lead in the hit film *Battleship*, which is based on the board game of the same name. She is also part of the ensemble cast of the upcoming comedy *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, which is based on the book of the same name.

Continuing its tradition as the biggest Memorial Day Weekend celebration in America, the Coca-Cola 600 pre-race show will pay tribute to veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The pre-race show will include military musical performances by the 2nd Division Marine Band from Camp Lejeune and 82nd Airborne Chorus, plus a rendition of Amazing Grace by the Charlotte Fire Department Pipe Band. Courtesy of LongHorn Steakhouse, country music superstar Darius Rucker will perform a 45-minute pre-race show concert and the national anthem.

Six hundred soldiers from Fort Bragg will participate in ground activities during pre-race ceremonies while the U.S. Army Black Daggers parachute team will descend from the skies. The show will also include a 21-gun salute by the Fort Bragg Firing Squad, a flyover by a B-52 Bomber from Barksdale Air Force Base and a duel burnout on pit road by 8,000 horsepower, Army sponsored NHRA top fuel dragsters driven by Tony Schumacher and Antron Brown.

Coca-Cola has been involved with stock car racing for more than 50 years and has been the official sparkling beverage of NASCAR since 1998. Through its partnerships with International Speedway Corporation, Speedway Motorsports, Inc. and Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Coca-Cola refreshes racing fans at the majority of NASCAR-sanctioned tracks. A signature part of the brand's NASCAR association is the Coca-Cola Racing Family – a group of top drivers that includes Greg Biffle, Jeff Burton, Denny Hamlin, Bobby Labonte, Joey Logano, Jamie McMurray, Ryan Newman, Danica Patrick and Tony Stewart. The Company also maintains relationships with Dale Jarrett, Ned Jarrett, Kyle Petty and Elliott Sadler. Coca-Cola Racing Family members make appearances and are featured in advertising, promotions and packaging.

Frontstretch tickets for the Coca-Cola 600 start at just \$49 with great views of pit road and the world's largest high-definition television. To purchase

tickets, fans can call the Charlotte Motor Speedway ticket office at 1-800-455-FANS (3267) or go online at www.charlottespeedway.com.

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/cgi-bin/mmg.cgi?eid=50273335&lang=en>



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