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Melinda Doolittle to Travel to Africa with First Lady Laura Bush to Distribute Bed Nets Funded by *American Idol* Viewers

American Idol finalist Melinda Doolittle will travel to Zambia on June 28th with Malaria No More to see and participate in malaria prevention programs as part of First Lady Laura Bush's upcoming trip through Africa. During the four-day tour, Doolittle will see the impact of malaria on the continent firsthand and assist in the distribution of 500,000 bed nets in Lusaka, Zambia to at-risk populations.

Doolittle's visit is part of the First Lady's five-day tour through Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zambia to highlight the Administration's work on HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and education in Africa.

The bed nets distributed in Zambia represent the first installment of funds contributed to Malaria No More by viewers of the hit TV show and talent contest *American Idol*. *American Idol*'s two-day charity special "Idol Gives Back" netted 60 million viewers and raised over \$70 million dollars for programs aiding children in Africa and America. The number one killer of children under five in Africa, malaria claims more than 1 million lives a year worldwide.

"Traveling to Africa has always been a life-long dream of mine," remarked Ms. Doolittle. "I am very excited to travel with the First Lady and Malaria No More and to show the impact the viewers of *American Idol* have had through their help and support during 'Idol Gives Back.'"

Malaria No More, an "Idol Gives Back" beneficiary, is helping fund the distribution in Zambia with the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The distribution will take place through an innovative program called Reaching HIV/AIDS Affected People with Integrated Development and Support (RAPIDS), which uses community health volunteers who travel into rural areas of Zambia on bicycles. In addition to bed nets, the volunteers deliver HIV/AIDS medication, nutrition supplements, and toys for children.

Doolittle, who was first introduced to malaria through "Idol Gives Back," will help load bed nets onto community health workers' bikes for remote delivery. She also plans to perform a song as part of the day's program. On June 29th, she will travel with U.S. Malaria Coordinator Admiral Timothy Ziemer to visit various malaria sites, including a health clinic where malaria is treated in children.

Doolittle's immense voice and positive attitude captivated audiences across the country, landing her third place in this year's *American Idol*. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri and now based in Brentwood, Tennessee, Doolittle first began singing in the 7th grade. While she recorded gospel in the United States and abroad as a teenager, Doolittle's professional career was not launched until after college graduation when she worked as a backup singer for Aaron Neville, CeCe Winans, Alabama, and Jonny Lang, among others. Doolittle entered the Idol spotlight after an impromptu audition with friends.

Founded in 2006 by leading non-governmental institutions, Malaria No More (www.MalariaNoMore.org) galvanizes individuals, organizations, and corporations in the private sector to provide life-saving bed nets and other critical interventions to families in need. Together these investments will significantly reduce malaria infections and make malaria-related deaths a thing of the past. Malaria No More works in partnership with the American Red Cross; the Global Business Coalition; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; Millennium Promise; Population Services International; the President's Malaria Initiative; UNICEF; United Nations Foundation; United Way of America; and others.