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ROYAL ARTS FENCING ACADEMY MOVES TO LARGER FACILITY, ANNOUNCES GRAND OPENING

GAHANNA, Ohio- *Faster than a speeding bullet...almost.* The tip of the fencing weapon is the fastest thing in sports, second only to the marksman's bullet. See what it feels like to wield this instrument of defense at the grand opening of the Royal Arts Fencing Academy's new facility on September 18, from 12 - 4pm.

Located at 5770 Westbourne Ave., the Royal Arts Fencing Academy (RAFA) boasts the largest facility in the Midwest with the most professional training available. Lessons in all three Olympic fencing weapons-saber foil and epee- are taught. Whether looking for a sport to start your child in or a new pastime, fencing is a fun, safe way to develop coordination and balance, while instilling the ideals of honor and determination.

"My favorite part about fencing is you can start at age five and go on forever, whereas you are limited with other sports," said Julia Richey, owner and head coach of Royal Arts Fencing Academy. "You win all the way around with the physical, mental and emotional benefits that get you through life, through school and help you stay in shape."

Born in Russia, Richey was a member of the Russian National team for 13 years and was a coach at the Olympic training center in Moscow prior to coming to the United States in 1999. She opened Royal Arts Fencing Academy to educate students on fencing and the life skills that accompany it.

Richey has won numerous national and international titles throughout her career, but her proudest moment came in 2009 when her student Taylor McIntyre won the national championship. Coaches receive a medal if their athlete wins a title and "That was the most special medal out of all my medals," said Richey, who began training McIntyre in 2004. "That was a big victory for me."

Richey's partner, Tim Mills, is certified in all three weapons by the United States Fencing Association and his saber instruction is the fastest growing program at Royal Arts.

RAFA offers special events ranging from birthday parties to fencing movie night lock-ins, where participants receive fencing training and spend the night watching classic fencing movies in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

Besides being an increasingly popular sport (due in part to the phenomenal performance of the fencing team in the 2008 Olympics with the fourth highest medal count for the United States) fencing is thought to aid in the rehabilitation of injuries and is commonly used to help those with disabilities.

Richey exemplifies how fencing can benefit the human body. In 2008, Richey was in a car accident and suffered serious head trauma. She was in a coma and doctors attribute her recovery to her years of fencing.

Fencing is an excellent cardiovascular exercise, getting the heart pumping and blood flowing while it tones the body, by building muscle, increasing flexibility with various precision movements, and sharpening the mind! You learn to analyze your opponent and make split-second decisions to counter oncoming attacks.

The health benefits are clearly there, but is it really safe to wield a sharp, pointy object? You bet.

Unlike high-contact sports such as football and wrestling, or the non-contact sports of gymnastics and skiing, fencing is the only sport that aids rather than induces injury.

President Theodore Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, actor Vigo Mortenson, singer Neil Diamond, and movies stars Catherine Zeta-Jones, Will Smith and Tom Cruise are just a few prominent people who are also fencers.

Richey herself may be the next movie star. Her life will be portrayed in a film called *American Fencer*. It documents her sheer determination to succeed via transition from training in Russia to becoming a champion in America, while overcoming such tribulations as a near fatal accident and starting over on foreign soil.

The film will debut in 2011 at the 1st annual Arnold Sports Film Festival which is part of the Arnold Sports Festival, the largest multi-sport event in the nation. RAFA has been the host club for the Arnold Fencing Classic since the sport was added to the Festival in 2004.

Mills and Richey both have a true love for the sport of fencing and are eager to share their knowledge with any and all. The Grand Opening offers visitors the opportunity to meet the coaches, learn about this up and coming sport, along with its fitness and recreational benefits, and take their first "jab" into the world of fencing.

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