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## **Alabama A&M Grad Works International Connections to Benefit Alabama SilverStone International Hosts Statewide 2007 Futbol Internacional Soccer Festival**

**(Birmingham, AL)** – Connecting the world through sports is more than just a tag line for Nichelle Gainey’s business, SilverStone International.

It’s a way of life for the Alabama A&M graduate, a military brat who has traveled globally her whole life. She has parlayed her personal charisma and her success as the marketing director and assistant commissioner of the Southwestern Athletic Conference into her own business.

SilverStone International allows Gainey to combine her two passions – love of her hometown and state, and her love for international sports – with business.

SSI is bringing one of the world’s largest women’s soccer events outside of the Olympics and World Cup to six cities across Alabama. Her aim in working with the Alabama Youth Soccer Association, which organized the event, is to connect state business leaders with top leaders and officials from other countries.

“SilverStone International’s role is to bring outstanding international opportunities like Futbol Internacional, one of the world’s premier soccer events, to Alabama,” Gainey says.

Futbol Internacional 2007 kicks off April 22-28 with national women’s teams from Argentina, Canada, China, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago and the USA’s Under-21 national team. It will pump more than \$2.84 million into six Alabama cities, all while further polishing the state’s image internationally.

The festival starts in Birmingham’s historic Legion Field, home of the 1996 Olympic Soccer matches, with opening ceremonies and double-header games. Soccer matches will be held April 24, at Alabama A&M’s Football Stadium in Huntsville and April 26 at the Jack Allen Soccer Stadium in Decatur, as well as games in Montgomery and Tuscaloosa. It will end with triple-header finals, including the championship match, in Mobile’s Baker High School stadium.

### **Building on International Contacts**

The child of a military father and her Huntsville-native mother, Gainey said she has traveled globally for years. But she didn’t realize the importance of soccer to fans in other countries until she attended the FIFA World Cup games in Germany last year. She was amazed at the enthusiasm of soccer fans when she learned that crime worldwide fell to virtually nothing as people around the world watched the final games.

Gainey decided to use the international business connections she’s made through her involvement with the 2006 World Cup to help build business in the U.S., particularly in Alabama and Birmingham, even though some friends and associates urged her to move from her home state to one with a more progressive image.

"I am committed to bringing opportunities for businesses to Alabama and its cities through sports," Gainey said. "Soccer is truly a world sport that brings the nations' community and business leaders together like no other sport."

Gainey sees herself as a conduit who brings positive international attention to Alabama and build ties between its businesses and South Africa and other countries. Her goal is to showcase Alabama cities to the world as a member of the 2010 World Cup Organizing Committee for South Africa. She was also named by the head of the South African Football Association to help the group plan for its hosting of that country's premiere sporting event.

Dr. Amos Adamu, a member of the executive committee of FIFA, the organizer of all World Cup sporting events, says he is impressed with Gainey's knowledge of sports and her ability to bring people around the world together.

"She has organized a great international soccer event in the U.S.," Dr. Adamu says of Futbol Internacional. "I look forward to working with her as a member of FIFA leading up to the World Cup and beyond."

She is especially excited that China's women's team is part of Futbol Internacional, since she will be traveling as a guest of Dr. Adamu to China, where the FIFA Women's World Cup 2007 soccer tournament will be held Sept. 10-30.

Also, Gerard Greene, Consul General for Trinidad & Tobago, plans to attend Futbol Internacional at Ms. Gainey's invitation. University of Alabama at Birmingham student Nadine Liverpool – a player on its championship women's soccer team whose parents are from the Caribbean island country – will play for T&T's national team, the Soca Princesses.

Proceeds from 2007 Futbol Internacional will help the Alabama Youth Soccer Association's Olympic development scholarship fund. In addition, proceeds will be used to expand soccer outreach programs to underserved children in the Black Belt, in conjunction with Governor Bob Riley's Black Belt Action Committee, and to inner-city youths.

Supporters of the event include Governor Riley, U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, and U.S. Rep. Artur Davis. "Alabama is fast becoming the destination of choice for foreign corporations looking for a talented workforce and a hospitable place to do business," Gov. Riley said.

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*2007 Futbol Internacional sponsors include SilverStone International – which is also organizing the event with AYSA – and Buffalo Rock, Subway, the Jefferson County Commission, the Mobile County Commission and the Alabama Tourism Department.*

*Other sponsors include: Brookwood Medical Center, Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Clinic of Alabama, D1 Sports Training, the Alabama Small Business Development Consortium, Baumhower's Restaurant, Ready Mix USA, Office Furniture USA, Latino News, Radio Centro, KPI Latino, the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau, the City of Birmingham, and the City of Mobile.*

*General admission tickets are \$16 per person; children under age 4 are admitted for free. Purchase tickets and get more detailed game information online at the soccer festival website, <http://www.2007futbolinternacional.com/>.*

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