



PHOTO RELEASE



**CARRIE UNDERWOOD'S C.A.T.S. FOUNDATION &  
ACM LIFTING LIVES  
PARTNER TO SURPRISE CHECOTAH, OK STUDENTS**

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**Gift Marks First-Ever Donation from C.A.T.S. & First-Ever  
ACM Lifting Lives Matching Gift Program for Reigning Entertainer of the Year**

Encino, CA (August 28, 2009) – Carrie Underwood's new hometown foundation, the **Checotah Animal, Town & School Foundation (C.A.T.S.)** and the Academy of Country Music's charitable arm, **ACM Lifting Lives** partnered to surprise students today in Checotah, Oklahoma with a gift valued at more than \$117,000 in new instruments for their music programs—and a special appearance and performance by ACM Entertainer of the Year, Underwood.

Music students district-wide were invited to a special “last-minute” assembly at Checotah High School, with buses bringing Checotah Intermediate School and Checotah Middle School in for the occasion. Students and faculty alike were surprised when Checotah High Principal Brian Terry introduced Underwood to the stage, alongside Erin Spahn, Director of ACM Lifting Lives.

Spahn and Underwood then unveiled the gift, including an electric guitar and amp, electric piano and brass instruments such as saxophones, French horns, tubas and much more. The instruments will be shared throughout the Checotah school district, and were ordered through Yamaha Corporate Artist Affairs at a special philanthropic price.

During the presentation, Underwood asked 5<sup>th</sup> grader Kennedee Rittenhouse to join her onstage to perform “So Small,” a performance that brought the house down. Checotah High School senior Brooke Ramsey, student council president, presented Underwood and Spahn with a bouquet of roses to thank the organizations for the gift.

“We are so lucky as a school district and a town to have an ambassador like Carrie,” said Brian Terry, Principal of Checotah High School. “She was Valedictorian here and continues to be an outstanding citizen of Checotah. Today was a very special day for the students and faculty.”

“When Carrie came to us with this idea, it just seemed a natural fit,” said Erin Spahn, who met with Underwood earlier this summer to plan the gift. “The Board of ACM Lifting Lives liked the concept so well, we’ve decided to build on it. Every year, we will present a matching gift opportunity to the ACM Entertainer of the Year for any endeavor that uplifts through the power of music. Carrie started that ball rolling, and we’re really proud to be a part of this with her today.”

“I am so proud to have come from such a wonderful community that helped shape me as a person,” said Underwood, “and I can think of nothing better than to share the gift of music with the students in my hometown. It’s so great to be able to give back in a way that can truly better the lives of these kids and help create dreams and opportunities. I’d like to give a very special thanks to the Academy of Country Music’s ‘Lifting Lives’ for helping me make this dream come true.”

#### **About the C.A.T.S. Foundation**

Carrie Underwood announced just last week the creation of the C.A.T.S Foundation to help causes in her hometown of Checotah, Oklahoma. Privately funded, the C.A.T.S. Foundation will help with needs and services in the area of Checotah to directly impact the community. This is the first donation to the Checotah community from C.A.T.S.

#### **About the Academy of Country Music**

Founded in 1964, the **ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC** is an artist and industry-driven organization, providing the financial resources to ensure the on-going philanthropic work of **ACM Lifting Lives**, the charitable arm of the Academy which works to improve lives through music. The Academy is comprised of more than 3,800 professional members and more than 180,000 associate members and is headquartered in Encino, Calif. For more information, log onto [www.acmliftinglives.org](http://www.acmliftinglives.org) or [www.acmcountry.com](http://www.acmcountry.com).

This donation kicks off a new **ACM Lifting Lives Entertainer of the Year Matching Gift** program, wherein each year the reigning ACM Entertainer of the Year will be invited to impact a community of his/her choice with a special opportunity that uplifts through the power of music, and the Academy will match funds for greater impact.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE AT GETTY IMAGES – [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)

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**CAPTION #1 (TRADE):** Executives from the **C.A.T.S. Foundation, ACM Lifting Lives and Checotah Public Schools** including [left to right] Principal Brian Terry, Carrie Underwood, Erin Spahn Director of ACM Lifting Lives, and Gary Haber, President ACM Lifting Lives and Director & Treasurer C.A.T.S. were on hand at Checotah High School to surprise students with more than \$117,000 in new music instruments, a joint gift from Underwood’s **C.A.T.S. Foundation** and **ACM Lifting Lives**.

**CAPTION #2 (CONSUMER):** ACM Entertainer of the Year, **Carrie Underwood**, performs with Checotah fifth-grader Kennedee Rittenhouse at a surprise assembly at Checotah High School as part of an appearance to surprise students with more than \$117,000 in new music instruments, a joint gift from Underwood's **C.A.T.S. Foundation** and **ACM Lifting Lives**.

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