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## **ROCCO FIORENTINO, 13, APPEARS ON *SESAME STREET* DURING HISTORIC 40<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY SEASON**

**JANUARY 22, 2010 – FIRST AIR DATE IN PHILADELPHIA AREA  
(Jan. 21, 2010 – Nationally)**

Philadelphia, PA (January 7, 2010) – Rocco Fiorentino, 13, blind jazz performer and humanitarian who lives in Voorhees, NJ, will appear on *Sesame Street* in the Philadelphia area (on WHYY-TV) on January 22, 2010 at 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. with the segment re-running on several dates beginning in March. *Sesame Street*, the world's largest informal children's educator, celebrated its 40th birthday on November 10, 2009, the exact day the series debuted on television four decades ago. First Lady Michelle Obama was the guest on the first show of the season. Other celebrities appearing this season include Hugh Jackman, Greg Kinnear, Jake Gyllenhaal, Cameron Diaz, Debra Messing, Eva Longoria, Sarah Jessica Parker, Adam Sandler, to name a few. The day that Rocco's segment was shot Brendan Fraser was also taping.

Rocco's segment is on Show #4207 where he first meets Telly Monster and Elmo. Elmo is surprised that Telly has to describe Elmo's appearance to Rocco and Rocco explains it's because he is blind and can't see him. Elmo initially feels sorry for Rocco but Rocco puts him at ease immediately saying, "It's just natural for me." Elmo invites his *Sesame Street* friends to meet Rocco and they all gather on the famous *Sesame Street* steps when Rocco sings a jazz version of "Everybody's Song". Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Abby Cadabby, Zoe, Maria and Gordon are among the cast who join Rocco in song.

Rocco, who is totally blind due Retinopathy of Prematurity, had a great time taping his *Sesame Street* segment. He was happy to share his upbeat message with Elmo and the cast about his experiences of being blind. "I like people to know that even though I'm blind, I can still do many things I love – like singing, playing piano, drums and the saxophone. Everyone was so nice at *Sesame Street*. Elmo made me laugh the whole time."

Rocco Fiorentino is an advocate for all children who are blind or visually impaired. Born four months premature, he weighed only one and a half pounds and had a 3% chance to survive. Because of the high level of oxygen needed to keep him alive in the incubator, he lost all his eyesight. To help other families with children like Rocco, his parents founded The Little Rock Foundation, named for him. As the Ambassador, Rocco continually builds awareness about blindness through lobbying and educating the public about the importance of Braille education by guest speaking at schools, senior groups,

and other organizations throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Since he was five years old, he has given speeches to the NJ. State Legislature and, due to that, \$1.2 million as been dedicated to Braille education and services in NJ. In addition, he has saved 50 jobs at the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and has inspired the State of NJ and Pennsylvania to name October as Blindness Awareness Month, beginning in 2009.

Rocco is honored to have received several national and regional awards – The Hands-On Award from the National Braille Press (2009), Kohls Kids Who Care (2009), Volvo for Life Finalist Award (2008), Great Friend to Kids Award from Please Touch Museum (2007) and more. Because Rocco is a talented jazz musician, his Ambassador role is extended to performance opportunities as well. He has appeared on many television programs including NBC’s Today Show and as an American Idol reporter for FOX TV Philadelphia.

With over 21 million minutes (and counting) since Count von Count’s first “ah ah ah,” the groundbreaking children’s program that began as an experiment has evolved and continues to grow with children and their changing needs. Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization that revolutionized children’s television programming with the landmark *Sesame Street*. The Workshop produces local *Sesame Street* programs, seen in over 140 countries, and other acclaimed shows to help bridge the literacy gap including *The Electric Company* and *Pinky Dinky Doo*. Beyond television, the Workshop produces content for multiple media platforms on a wide range of issues including literacy, health and military deployment. Initiatives meet specific needs to help young children and families develop critical skills, acquire healthy habits and build emotional strength to prepare them for lifelong learning. Learn more at [www.sesamestreet.org](http://www.sesamestreet.org).

For more information about Rocco Fiorentino, visit [www.musicbyrocco.com](http://www.musicbyrocco.com).

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