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CPAC signs contract with Olympics-bound Rachael Flatt

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With her first-place win Jan. 23 at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Spokane, WA, 17-year-old Colorado skater Rachael Flatt secured her spot in the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, BC.

And she takes with her the sponsorship of the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee in a one-year contract, inked just days before Ms. Flatt's powerful performance in Spokane.

According to Linda Weyers, administrator for Monte Vista, CO-based committee, the relationship with the young athlete was initiated by Ms. Flatt's representatives.

"We were contacted by them last year," Ms. Weyers said, noting that the Flatt camp considered partnering with Colorado potatoes to be a good fit for both. CPAC's marketing message in 2010 trumpets the health benefits of potatoes, and Ms. Flatt's physical and intellectual attributes dovetail well with the Super Carb campaign.

Ms. Weyers said that the committee is tentatively planning two personal appearances by Ms. Flatt -- first at the National Potato Council meeting to be hosted in the San Luis Valley in June by Colorado potato grower Roger Mix, who is also president of the National Potato Council; and second at the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit in Orlando, FL, in October.

"We are eager to meet with Rachael and talk about our plans," Ms. Weyers added.

For her part, Ms. Flatt had said after the U.S. championships that she would return to Colorado Springs, attend high school classes and then fly to Vancouver with mentor Dorothy Hamill, 1976 Olympic figure skating gold medal winner, for the Feb. 12-28 Games. The women's figure skating competition will be held Feb. 23 and 25.

Ms. Flatt and the Colorado connection, Ms. Weyers said, was a major factor in the sponsorship. The Flatt family resides in Colorado Springs, and Ms. Flatt trains at The Broadmoor Arena and is a member of the 60-year-old Broadmoor Skating Club.

And Ms. Flatt's performance both on and off ice is also key.

"She is described as 'solid' and 'steady,' exhibiting 'grace under pressure,'" Ms. Weyers said. "She is really such a wholesome young role model, and she recently connected with Reading Is Fundamental, a non-profit children's literacy program. We thought she was the perfect spokesperson for us."

A member of U.S. Figure Skating Scholastic Honors Team, the skater is a straight-A student enrolled in advanced placement courses in English, chemistry and biology at Cheyenne Mountain High School, which honored her with the 2008 Athletic Excellence Award.

She will graduate this year, and taking the lead from her mother, Jody, who is a retired biotech scientist, and her father, Jim, who holds a doctorate in chemical engineering and heads a biofuels company, Ms. Flatt has visited several top universities, including Columbia, Harvard and Yale.

She is also a volunteer with the learn-to-skate program at her local rink, and she has taken an active role in Blades for the Cure, a charitable organization that uses prominent figure skaters to raise funds to benefit those in need of financial assistance as they battle cancer and other diseases.

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