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### **The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala at The Riverhouse to Feature Celebrity Guest; Olympic Gold Medalist and NBC's *The Biggest Loser* Contestant, Rulon Gardner**

**October 20, 2011 – Bend, OR** – The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala at The Riverhouse, produced by the Central Oregon Visitors Association and The Riverhouse, announced today that celebrity Rulon Gardner, Olympic Gold Medalist and NBC's *The Biggest Loser* contestant, will be the inspirational guest speaker at The Gala set for January 16, 2012. Proceeds from this event will benefit Grandma's House.

Rulon Gardner is an American Olympian who competed in the 2000 Olympic Games, winning the gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling upon defeating Russian Aleksandr Karelin. Karelin was previously undefeated in 13 years of international competition and had not given up a single point in six years, prior to his loss in the gold medal match to Gardner. In 2001, Gardner added a world championship to his list of accomplishments with a victory in the finals over a competitor from Hungary. His win made him the only American to ever win both a World and Olympic title in Greco-Roman wrestling. Gardner was also a contestant on the 11<sup>th</sup> season of the hit reality television show, NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, and after 16 weeks on the show had lost a total of 173 pounds.

Celebrating its twentieth year, The Gala at The Riverhouse has raised over \$1.4 million for local beneficiaries such as Sparrow Clubs, KIDS Center, Family Resource Center, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Oregon, Ronald McDonald House, Every Kid Fund, Deschutes Children's Foundation, Tower Theater, Cascade Youth and Family Center, Habitat For Humanity, Volunteers in Medicine and Heart of Oregon Corp. Proceeds from the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala will benefit Grandma's House.

Grandma's House, who in 2012 is also celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> year of serving the community, is a non-profit, faith-based home and outreach program that provides safe shelter to homeless and/or abused pregnant, parenting and adopting girls between the ages of 12 and 19. Grandma's House is committed to providing physical, emotional and spiritual support for these pregnant or parenting teens, and they emphasize wellness and healthy development of children, families and communities through education and guidance. The goal of Grandma's House is to help each young woman become self-sufficient and able to make responsible decisions for herself and her child. Grandma's House is the only home of its kind east of the Cascades addressing the needs of this unique population.

The Gala at The Riverhouse has been a solid fundraising event in the community for the past 20 years. The Central Oregon Visitors Association in partnership with The Riverhouse produces the entire event from preliminary beneficiary selection, through donation procurement, ticket sales, and volunteer support for the evening of the event. The Riverhouse also completely donates all

the food and beverage, facility, and labor for the night of the event; thereby ensuring that 100% of ticket sales directly benefit the selected charity. The Gala remains one of the most successful charity events Central Oregon and continues to help local non-profits in a meaningful way year after year.

The Gala evening will include an elegant five course meal, one-of-a-kind silent auction and special guest appearance and presentation by Rulon Gardner. Individual tickets are on sale now for \$125 and corporate tables for eight are available for \$1000. Tickets are limited and sell out quickly.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.riverhouse.com/gala](http://www.riverhouse.com/gala) or contact Grandma's House at 541-383-3515. The Gala committee is still accepting application through October 31, 2011 from local non-profit organizations to be chosen as the beneficiary for the January 2013 event. Visit the official Gala website at [www.riverhouse.com/gala](http://www.riverhouse.com/gala) for details.

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