FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: media@safesummers.org

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins Announces $5 Million Award to Safe Summers Foundation to Strengthen Safety at Rural Youth Camps

Announced at the inaugural Heaven's 27 Cup Soirée & Golf Tournament, federal funds will help nonprofit camps in rural America with safety and disaster preparedness resources

AUSTIN, Texas — November 17, 2026 – At the inaugural Heaven's 27 Cup Soirée & Golf Tournament in Austin, Texas, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced a $5 million cooperative agreement with the Safe Summers Foundation. This partnership will support nonprofit camps in rural communities across the U.S., as well as funding for research and resources to better protect the 26 million children who attend American summer camps.

“Our hearts remain heavy for the children whose lives were tragically cut short and for the families who continue to bear this unimaginable loss,” said Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins. “Every parent should have confidence that their child is protected, and no family have to endure the devastation of a tragedy that could have been prevented. That is why I am proud to announce this five-million-dollar cooperative agreement to the Safe Summers Foundation to help youth camps implement new safety standards.”

"When we lost our daughters at Camp Mystic, we made a commitment to ensure such a preventable tragedy never happens to another family," said Blake Bonner, father of Lila and Co-founder of the Safe Summers Foundation. "This significant investment moves us closer to keeping that promise. Our USDA partnership will help camps across rural America put critical, life-saving safety measures in place before the next child ever arrives at summer camp. We are deeply grateful to the Secretary and her team for working with us and other strategic partners to scale this shared mission."

The USDA grant will be used to improve safety and emergency preparedness at rural camps, fund research on best practices for camp safety in rural settings, and allow The Safety Navigator to scale its free resources to serve more camps. Additional private donations for this effort will power research, resources, and advocacy that sets the standards to keep kids safe at American summer camps.

Why rural camps

Overnight camps largely operate in rural areas and play an important role in their local economies. At the same time, rural residential and day camps are often remote, could have limited cell coverage and access to nearby emergency responders, and may run on lean budgets. Those are the conditions whereby preparation matters most and this partnership unlocks more resources accordingly.

An evening in honor of the Heaven's 27

Secretary Rollins made the announcement from the stage at the Heaven's 27 Cup Soirée, held Sunday, November 15, at a private residence in Tarrytown, Austin. The inaugural Heaven’s 27 Soirée and Golf Tournament Cup served as a joint fundraiser for the Heaven's 27 Foundation and the Safe Summers Foundation. The two-day event brought together families, supporters,

and partners in honor of the 25 campers and two young counselors who lost their lives while in the care of Camp Mystic in the flooding on July 4, 2025.

The evening opened with a cocktail hour and bracelet-making station sponsored by supporter Kendra Scott, followed by a dinner program and live auction. Guests also watched "If You Knew Her," a tribute video that shares a glimpse into each of the “Heaven’s 27” girl’s personalities through the voices of their loved ones. A Paddles Up giving moment invited guests to give in honor of the girls. The night closed with a concert featuring Josh Abbott, John Baumann, Jack Ingram, and Julianna Rankin, and a surprise drone show.

About Safe Summers Foundation:
An initiative of the No More Victims Alliance, Safe Summers Foundation launched during the summer of 2025 with a coalition of parents of the "Heaven's 27," 25 campers and two counselors who lost their lives during flash floods while in the care of Camp Mystic in Hunt, Texas, last July 4th. Grounded in the hope that such a preventable tragedy never happens to another family, Safe Summers works to keep kids safe through prevention, preparation, and protection, while preserving the joy and American tradition of summer camp. For more information, visit safesummers.org.

###