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**MATTHEW SHEPARD FOUNDATION CONGRATULATES DAVID STERN
AND THE NBA FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP IN HELPING ERASE HATE**

NBA REPRESENTATIVE FIRED FOR HATEFUL REMARKS

Casper, WY – The Matthew Shepard Foundation applauds David Stern and the National Basketball Association for taking swift and appropriate action against former Miami Heat Player and NBA representative, Tim Hardaway. Mr. Hardaway demonstrated blatant promotion of hate during an interview on *790 The Ticket* when he stated that he “hate(s) gay people” and was admittedly homophobic.

“I am personally thankful that Mr. Stern and the NBA demonstrated strong leadership in how they dealt with this situation. These actions send a strong message that ‘hate’ directed at any member of our society is not acceptable,” said Judy Shepard, Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Longstanding homophobia within the sports community has recently become more apparent to the public because of Mr. Hardaway’s inexcusable comments and the remarks of NFL players who were a part of the Snickers Superbowl campaign, which the Matthew Shepard Foundation strongly condemned.

“Hate is a learned behavior. Our sports heroes have a responsibility to send positive messages to our younger generation to teach them that hate is unacceptable.” concluded Shepard.

The Matthew Shepard Foundation was founded by Dennis and Judy Shepard in memory of their 21-year-old son, Matthew, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in Wyoming in October 1998. Created to honor Matthew in a manner that was appropriate to his dreams, beliefs and aspirations, the Foundation seeks to “Replace Hate with Understanding, Compassion & Acceptance” through its varied education, outreach and advocacy programs. For more information, please visit www.MatthewShepard.org

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