

# Stephens College Volleyball

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Thursday, August 25, 2011

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## Stephens College Volleyball to “Pink Out” 2011 Season

**COLUMBIA** — A thought crossed Shane McAfee’s mind while sitting in a Stephens College athletic department staff meeting.

Athletic Director Deb Duren was discussing how Stephens’ Health Services office had received a pair of \$5,000 grants from the Mid-Missouri Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure<sup>®</sup> organization to raise awareness and promote prevention of breast cancer. The wheels began to turn in the brain of the third-year coach for the Stars volleyball team. He had heard of teams dedicating a single “Pink Out” match in support of breast cancer awareness and prevention, but never an entire season devoted to the cause.

After running the idea past Duren, McAfee submitted a grant proposal which was subsequently approved.

The \$5,000 grant would enhance the program’s budget, but even more importantly it would allow the Stars to support breast cancer awareness and prevention by sharing prevention brochures and pamphlets at each match; sponsoring a volleyball clinic for the community’s handicapped; and giving the team an opportunity to be involved with the Komen Race for a Cure.

Oh, and it would give the Stars a new look that would bring attention to the cause each time the team took the floor.

As a result of the grant from Mid-Missouri Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure<sup>®</sup>, the volleyball team will dedicate its entire 2011 season to breast cancer awareness, dubbing it “A Season on the Pink: Pink Out for a Cure.” The Stars will forego their traditional maroon and gold uniforms for a “pinked out” look with pink uniforms and warm-ups.

“The grant we received from the Mid-Missouri Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure<sup>®</sup> will allow us to join forces in a shared vision for a world without breast cancer and move ever closer to fulfilling the promise of Susan G. Komen for the Cure – to save lives and end breast cancer forever by empowering people, ensuring quality care for all and energizing science to find the cures,” McAfee said.

But in addition to their new look and raising awareness for breast cancer, the Stars will look to improve upon their 18-20 overall; 3-13 in the American Midwest Conference record from a year ago. To accomplish that, Stephens will have to offset the loss of six seniors who McAfee described as “outstanding student athletes.” In addition to their leadership on the court, each one was outstanding in the classroom as well, with all

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six being named to the AMC's All-Academic squad.”

“How do you make up for that big of a loss?” McAfee said. “We will miss them terribly on and off the court, but we will move on.”

And move on they will. But for the Stars to be competitive in the always tough AMC, McAfee said the “nucleus” of this year’s team – seniors Kelsey Benson, Spencer, Neb., Chrissy Echeverria, Casa Grande, Ariz., and Megan Sheffield, Windsor, Mo., and junior Kelsie Byrd, Loraine, Ill., “will have to perform at a high level.”

Performing at a high level comes natural for Sheffield, a 6-2 middle who was an all-conference honorable mention selection a year ago. She was also named to the AMC all-academic squad.

Sheffield led the team in blocks in 2010 with 140 total (1.1 bpg), to rank No. 33 in NAIA Division I in both total blocks (140) and blocks per game (1.120 bpg).

She will be supported by Benson, also an all-academic selection, Byrd who tallied 212 kills (1.68 kpg); and Echeverria who racked up 133 digs (1.17 dpd).

In addition to the four returning players, the Stars will add four newcomers to the roster as well. McAfee said talented freshman Lesta Newberry, Mo., will give the Stars “flexibility” in the front row while fellow freshman Lanie Hurt, Excelsior Springs, Mo., will handle the setter role for the squad. McAfee predicts that transfer student Laura Ward, St. Charles, Mo., should “push her way into the starting lineup” over the course of the season.

An unknown commodity for the squad will be walk-on Logan Weber, Camdenton, Mo.

The Stars open the season on the road with August 30 in Marshall against Missouri Valley before returning to Silverthorne Arena on September 7 against AMC foe William Woods.

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