

## Sports & Entertainment

# Rising TV star Dara Reneé, 'Shark Tank' investor Daymond John, Olympian Sanya Richards-Ross, and Hollywood veteran Lance Gross among celebs participating in Disney Dreamers Academy

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., April 1, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- TV stars Daymond John, Dara Reneé, Lance Gross and Sanya Richards-Ross are among the celebrities lending their support to the 100 students taking part in the 17th annual Disney Dreamers Academy (April 3-7) at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida.

These celebrities will be joined by well-known DJ Big Tigger and national radio host Rickey Smiley, plus several acclaimed educators, designers, producers and Disney executives, who will spend five days helping the students to dream big. Additionally, several sponsors, such as Sprite, AT&T and Delta Air Lines, have joined this year to further drive the program's mission of broadening career awareness and creating exclusive enrichment opportunities for these high school students from diverse and underrepresented communities around the country.

In addition to being a popular figure on the hit ABC TV series "Shark Tank," John is a motivational speaker, entrepreneur and investor who is well-known for launching the successful clothing line FUBU. Gross, an actor and model, had a career-defining lead role in the Tyler Perry hit show "House of Payne." And Richards-Ross is a four-time Olympic gold medal track star who successfully made the leap from the track to a recurring role on the reality TV series "The Real Housewives of Atlanta."

Reneé, best known for playing Kourtney in the Disney+ Original series "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series," will serve as the program's



Dara Renee

"DREAMbassador" where she will be a mentor and advocate for the students. Reneé will share personal insights, drawing from her own journey of chasing her dreams of becoming a multi-faceted artist on stage and screen as an actor, singer and dancer. She has already appeared in various on-screen roles, including ABC's "Black-ish," and "Grey's Anatomy," and is set to star in the upcoming Disney Original movie "Descendants: The Rise of Red," streaming this summer on Disney+.

"There are few things that I'm more passionate about than nurturing the lives of young people, especially talented ones who just need a little inspiration," said Reneé. "Being the DREAMbassador for Disney Dreamers Academy this year is the perfect

way for me to help engage with these young minds and hopefully offer them the guidance and spark they need to blow open the doors to their career dreams."

Other noted speakers participating in the event this year include:

- Big Tigger**, a DJ, rapper, TV and radio personality, best known as the host of BET's "Rap City" and "106 & Park." He currently hosts "The Big Tigger Morning Show" on WVEE in Atlanta

- Rickey Smiley**, a comedian and radio and TV personality best known as the host of the na-



Daymond John

tionally syndicated radio show "The Rickey Smiley Morning Show"

- Dr. Johnnetta Cole**, an anthropologist, educator, author, museum director and the first Black female president of Spelman College

- Nikkolas Smith**, a contemporary artist, illustrator, author, activist and former Walt Disney Imagineer, who has illustrated movies, including "Black Panther," "Black Panther 2" and "Space Jam 2"

- Lyn Sisson-Talbert**, an accom-

plished Hollywood producer on various projects, including Netflix's first original live-action musical "Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey"

- Jérôme LaMaar**, a fashion designer, whose work was part of Beyoncé's "Black is King" film on Disney+

- Samara Cyn**, an emerging musical artist who is gaining popularity with her unique sound that fuses neo-soul and hip-hop

These celebrities are part of a wide-ranging lineup of noted professionals who will guide the

students through various immersive workshops that align with their dreams. These workshops introduce Disney Dreamers to diverse career paths in business, entertainment and science, and the many other career opportunities within The Walt Disney Company.

Each year, the Disney Dreamers are selected from thousands of applicants who answer essay questions about their personal stories and dreams for the future. The students and a parent or guardian enjoy an all-expenses paid trip to Walt Disney World Resort in Florida for the event. The program is an integral part of Disney's commitment to supporting diverse communities by encouraging the next generation to think and dream big.

Since 2008, Disney Dreamers Academy has inspired more than 1,600 students from across the country by fueling their dreams and showing them a world of possibilities as they prepare for their futures. In the years following, graduates have become storytellers, artists, engineers, innovators, journalists and more, and some have even become mentors to the Disney Dreamers who follow them.

Visit [DisneyDreamersAcademy.com](http://DisneyDreamersAcademy.com) and [Facebook.com/DisneyDreamersAcademy](https://www.facebook.com/DisneyDreamersAcademy) and [Instagram.com/disneydreamersacademy](https://www.instagram.com/disneydreamersacademy).

Email entertainment news and photos to [MSTentertainment@prodigy.net](mailto:MSTentertainment@prodigy.net)

## Oak Ridge Boys mourn the death of Norah Lee Allen, wife of group's lead singer Duane Allen



Norah Lee Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. April 1, 2024— The Oak Ridge Boys mourn the loss of Norah Lee Allen, wife of lead singer Duane Allen, who passed at 7:28 am CT Sunday morning, March 31st, after battling an extended illness. Norah Lee was 76 years old.

**Duane Allen shared this message with his close friends during the day on Sunday:**

"This morning, my wife of 54 years and 8 months took her last breath of air on planet Earth. Norah Lee went to be with Jesus at 7:28 am, Easter morning. She had not been feeling well for some time. Her family all spent the night with her last night at Vanderbilt Hospital. We took time singing with and to her, telling her stories, and loving her every second that God let us share her here on Earth. Jamie, Dee, and I would like to

thank you all for your love and prayers. We have been at her bedside for over nine weeks.

We would like to thank Donna, Ashley, Ginger, GiGi, and Mindy for helping stay some nights with her.

We would like to thank the doctors, nurses, medical workers, and specialty staff who did everything they could to help Norah Lee.

Check my Facebook page later for details on the arrangements.

We hope to have visitation and service at First Baptist Church on Tuesday, April 2, in Hendersonville, Tennessee."

Norah Lee graced the stage of the Grand Ole Opry with her majestic voice, class, and professionalism for over 40 years. As a background vocalist on country music's biggest stage, Norah Lee was an essential part of a core

Please see sports page 4



**KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES**  
ONLY IN THEATERS  
**MAY 10**