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Distinguished Guests Recognized at Youth Sports Safety Summit for Contributions to Education, Research and Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 6, 2011 – The Youth Sports Safety Alliance is dedicated to bringing attention to the issue of safety in youth sports. With 65 member organizations, there are literally hundreds of individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to advancing preventive measures and interventions. The Alliance recognizes the following individuals who have distinguished themselves as tireless advocates and are honored today for their efforts to bring issues forward to the public, conduct important research, propose legislative solutions, provide safety equipment, and educate athletes, parents and all those who work on playing fields and in locker rooms:

Rep. Tim Bishop (NY-1) represents New York's First Congressional District which spans the eastern end of Long Island from Smithtown to Montauk Point. A lifelong resident of the area, he was first elected to Congress in 2002. A strong advocate for America's youth, this year Congressman Bishop sponsored HR 469, the Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act of 2011. This legislation would provide for minimum state requirements for the prevention and treatment of concussions caused by participation in school sports. He also sponsored HR 6172 for the same purpose in the 111th Congress. Rep. Bishop introduced this legislation in order to build on actions of Washington, Oregon and others in asking school districts across the country to implement a concussion safety and management plan.

R. Dawn Comstock, PhD has dedicated much of her professional life to research and the epidemiology of injury among the physically active. In particular, her work focuses on the study of sports, recreation and leisure-time activity-related injuries among children and adolescents as well as the life-long health benefits associated with an active childhood. She is an associate professor at the Ohio State University College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics and College of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and a research faculty member at the Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP), the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital. As a result of her continued examination of youth sports and injury surveillance, Comstock is considered one of the country's leading experts on the topic, and her studies have had wide-reaching impact and attention across the national landscape. Comstock's dedication to her profession and continued publication of studies make her an invaluable resource to the organizations closely monitoring and adopting new medical protocols that protect today's young athletes.

Rep. Keith M. Ingram (Arkansas) successfully shepherded HB 1743 through the 2011 Arkansas Legislature. It is now known as Act 1214, and it was written "to promote the health and safety of students in public school athletic activities through the use of athletic trainers and professional development for coaches." Though 35 states and the District of Columbia have acted to protect students from the potentially catastrophic results of severe or repeated concussions, Ingram took his state a few steps further. His bill covers a variety of potential dangers for young athletes. School districts in Arkansas will be required to develop procedures that include recognition and management of the following: concussion, dehydration, or other emergencies; environmental issues that threaten health or safety of students; and communicable diseases; furthermore, the bill sets up a pilot grant program to provide access to certified athletic trainers in schools. Rep. Ingram's legislation will have far-reaching effects on the health and safety of Arkansas students.

Beth Mallon is an inspirational and dedicated woman who turned a devastating personal situation into a crusade for better youth sports safety health care and awareness. She is making a difference not only to her local San Diego community, but also to the nation at large. Mallon, along with her son Tommy, established Advocates for Injured Athletes (AIA) in October 2010. The foundation was created after Tommy suffered a career ending catastrophic injury in the final game of his senior high school lacrosse season. He suffered a concussion, his neck was fractured (C1) and one of his vertebral arteries had been dissected. The experience inspired Beth and Tommy, who is now a sophomore at the University of San Diego, to establish AIA with the mission of promoting sports safety through education. The organization has two primary goals: to educate the public on the essential need for certified athletic trainers to be present at all athletic events and to educate student athletes on recognizing signs and symptoms of potentially life threatening conditions. AIA has also has created a unique education program called Athletes Saving Athletes™ slated to launch early 2012 in San Diego County high schools.

“Football High” a PBS FRONTLINE production with Ark Media that aired on PBS in April 2011, investigated the new face of high school football and what is being done to ensure the players’ safety as the intensity of the sport grows. The documentary examined real life-and-death incidences of heat illness and head injuries, and beyond the broadcast, FRONTLINE expanded its coverage to include online chats with medical experts and provided extensive information for parents, players, coaches and media to sustain this vital dialogue. Producers Rachel Dretzin and Caitlin McNally led the team that created this groundbreaking special report at a time when youth sports safety legislation was, and continues to be, considered at both the state and national levels. Recent months have seen an increase in states passing laws that ensure the appropriate on-site medical care and clearance of the athlete to return to play. FRONTLINE’s behind-the-scenes look at the level of play and incidence of heatstroke and head injuries – and the vital need for continued education to treat and prevent them – has raised national awareness of these issues and made a difference in the way youth sports are played today.

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