FLORIDA SPORTS HALL OF FAME TO HONOR UF PROFESSOR WITH ANNUAL FAME FOR FITNESS AWARD

Jacksonville, FL – Dr. J.O. Spengler, Professor in the Department of Tourism, Recreation & Sport Management at the University of Florida, has been conducting research that is absolutely crucial to the future of our children’s health and well-being. And Spengler’s efforts aren’t going unnoticed. On Saturday, August 10, 2013, the Florida Sports Hall of Fame is going to bestow upon him their third annual Fame for Fitness Award in recognition of his “outstanding contribution and commitment to fighting childhood obesity and children’s diabetes.” Prior honorees were Ryan Nece, former NFL player for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Detroit Lions; and Annika Sorenstam, one of the most successful female golfers of all time. Spengler is the first non-professional athlete to be honored with the award, which says much about his accomplishments.

First and foremost, Spengler has conducted research through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Active Living Research program, which pursues research questions relevant to physical activity and childhood obesity prevention. He focused on “shared use,” whereby schools and municipal parks allow their facilities to be used by community residents and organizations for sport and recreation activities. He has met with city and county officials in Florida to advocate for more shared use, which better enables children to have access to free facilities for physical activity. Spengler also currently works with the American Heart Association creating policy on the topics of physical activity, recreational access, and obesity prevention – all to advocate for children and their health. In addition, Spengler is now the Director of SPARC, the Sport Policy and Research Collaborative at the University of Florida, which is the research extension of the Aspen Institute’s Project Play. The purpose
of Project Play is twofold: 1) identify breakthrough ideas and solutions that will raise youth physical activity participation rates, and 2) create conditions for stakeholders to work together to address systemic breakdowns that limit access to quality sport experiences. The Aspen Institute partners with many organizations that have the nation’s health in mind including Nike, the U.S. Olympic Committee, and ESPN.

“We have to figure out a way to get kids active at an early age through play. We then need to keep them active through both play and sport. Our mission is to support kids who want to play sports, give others the opportunity to do so, and encourage lifelong participation,” says Spengler. Physical activity (partnered with proper nutrition) is one of the primary ways to help prevent both childhood obesity and diabetes, which usually go hand-in-hand. Lastly, Spengler believes that it is important to provide safe sport and recreational facilities. He is working on making play spaces more safe for children through his research and outreach activities. He believes this will have the added benefit of improving opportunities for physical activity.

Ten individuals will also be inducted into the Florida Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2013 this weekend covering nine sports. Those individuals include:

- Chipper Jones: Baseball (former MLB third baseman for the Atlanta Braves)
- Gabrielle Reece: Volleyball (former professional in the Women’s Beach Volleyball League)
- Fred Taylor: Football (former NFL running back for the Jacksonville Jaguars and New England Patriots)
- Mark McCumber: Golf (10-time PGA Tour winner)
- Brian Gottfried: Tennis (World No. 3 player in 1977)
- Corky Rogers: Football (former football coaching legend)
- LeeRoy Yarbrough: NASCAR (#98; 14 career wins; given posthumously)
- Tim Hardaway: Basketball (retired NBA point guard for the Golden State Warriors, Miami Heat, Dallas Mavericks, Denver Nuggets, and Indiana Pacers)
- Brooke Bennett: Swimming (3-time Olympic champion)
- Pete Clemons: Rodeo (9-time Best All-Around Cowboy winner)

Both Spengler and new inductees are being treated to an Enshrinement Weekend where they will be attending a preseason NFL game of the Miami Dolphins vs. Jacksonville Jaguars on Friday evening, an 18-hole round of golf at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra, and lunch at the Omni Hotel before the start of the official ceremonies.

Spengler is very excited and feels honored to be named the recipient of this award. Many people will be in attendance to help him celebrate this great achievement including his family, faculty colleagues, and students from the University of Florida.

The 52nd Enshrinement VIP Reception begins at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and is followed by an ESPY-style ceremony at 7:15 p.m. The services are being held at Florida Times Union Center’s Terry Theatre in Jacksonville. Tickets for both events are $100.00 per person or $20.00 per person for general admission to the ceremony only.

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knowledge in tourism, recreation and sport management. The Department is also
dedicated to excellence in the preparation and training of future industry and academic
professionals, and providing relevant outreach to stakeholders.

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