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**Minnesota Chapter of the National Football Foundation
Announces Honorees for
2011 “Honoring Legends-Inspiring Leaders” Awards Dinner**
Golden Gophers Head Football Coach Jerry Kill to Give Keynote Address;
Former Broadcaster Ray Christensen to Receive Distinguished Minnesotan Award

Minneapolis, MN, March 8, 2011 The Minnesota Chapter of the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame (NFFMN) will honor outstanding individuals from the world of professional and amateur football in Minnesota at the Chapter’s annual awards dinner on April 17. The event, which will be held at the University of St. Thomas, will feature a keynote address by University of Minnesota head football coach **Jerry Kill**. In 2009, Coach Kill was presented with the National Football Foundation Courage Award by the Chicago Metro Chapter.

College and professional football Hall of Fame inductees are scheduled to attend the event, and WCCO-TV news personality **Frank Vascellaro** will return for his fourth year as Master of Ceremonies.

The Minnesota Chapter will present the 2011 **Distinguished Minnesotan Award** to **Ray Christensen** for his contributions to Minnesota football. Christensen's career in broadcasting began at University of Minnesota radio station KUOM. He joined WCCO Minneapolis/Saint Paul in 1963, where he was involved with not only sportscasting but also news and music. For 50 consecutive years (1951-2000), Christensen was the play-by-play announcer for Gopher football, calling 510 games. He also handled play-by-play duties for Gopher basketball for 45 years (1956-2001), tallying 1,309 games. He is widely known as the Voice of the Minnesota Golden Gophers.

Todd Fultz will be awarded the 2011 **Courage Award**. After sustaining serious injuries in a head-on vehicle collision on June 5, 2008, Fultz faced a long recovery. Fultz has said of his experience, which included five major surgeries and having to learn to walk again, “It has been a challenging two years of recovery but through this I have learned gratefulness, seen love, and felt true compassion like no other time in my life.” An active member of the Minnesota football community, Fultz played football for St. John's under College Football Hall of Fame Coach, John Gagliardi.

Jerry Seeman will be honored with the 2011 **Outstanding Officiating Award**. During his 16 seasons as a line judge, head linesman, and referee in the NFL, Seeman was selected to officiate in 15 playoff games, including two Pro Bowls and two Super Bowls: XXIII in 1989 and XXV in 1991. Super Bowl XXV was the last game he officiated. Seeman served as the Senior Director of Officiating for the NFL. During his tenure, he modernized the training and grading system for officials, and communication increased between his office and NFL teams.

Gordon L. “Gordy” Graham is the 2011 recipient of the **Fred Zamberletti Award**. The award, named for the legendary athletic trainer for the Minnesota Vikings, honors an outstanding Minnesotan athletic trainer who has had strong impact in the athletic training profession. Rochester native Gordy Graham was Head Athletic Trainer at the University of Minnesota Mankato from 1964-1993. Because of Graham's efforts, Mankato can claim to have the nation’s oldest, continually accredited athletic training education program.

For the first time this year, the NFFMN will present the **Bob Stein College Scholar-Athlete Award**. Bob Stein was the first collegiate football player in Minnesota to receive the National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete Award. The 2011 recipient of the Bob Stein College Scholar-Athlete Award is **Isaac Odum**, a senior from University of Minnesota Duluth. He was one of 16 National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete award winners in 2010 and was named ESPN Academic All-American of the Year in Division II.

Nine young men will receive recognition as outstanding high school **Scholar-Athletes**. These Scholar-Athletes, as nominated by their football coaches, were evaluated on their academic achievement (3.0 GPA or better), football ability, performance, leadership, attitude, and service to their community. Remarkably, the average GPA among the finalists was 3.89. The 2011 honorees are **Sam Berg (New Life Academy)**, **Ryan Beyer (Springfield HS)**, **Ryan Buria (Mountain Iron/Buhl HS)**, **Tyler Hamblin (Cretin-Derham Hall)**, **Joe Hatch (New Prague HS)**, **Zach Horejsi (Little Falls Community HS)**, **Andrew Hughes (Holy Family Catholic HS)**, **Dillon Olson (Grygla HS)**, and **Alex Taray (Floodwood HS)**,

The **4th Annual “Honoring Legends-Inspiring Leaders” awards dinner** will take place on **Sunday, April 17, at 6:00 pm** on the campus of the **University of St. Thomas**. To purchase tickets to the event or to become a member of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Football Foundation, please visit the Minnesota Chapter website (www.nffmn.org).

About the Minnesota Chapter:

The mission of the Minnesota Chapter of the NFF is to serve Minnesota and the nation by developing leadership, sportsmanship, competitive spirit, and academic excellence in America’s youth through promoting amateur football. The Chapter aims to:

- Inspire excellence through Minnesota and College Football Hall of Fame player and coach role models
- Highlight the educational and character-building benefits of football through youth programs
- Honor, publicize, and financially support student-athlete football players

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