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The Outland Trophy Joins Forces with the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases for a Public Awareness Campaign to Help #FightFlu

Bethesda, MD (July 23, 2018) – The **Football Writers Association of America (FWAA)** and the **National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID)** announced a new partnership to present the 2018 Outland Trophy as part of a public awareness campaign focused on the importance of influenza (flu) prevention during the 2018-2019 flu season. Selected by FWAA, the trophy is awarded annually to the top interior lineman in college football.

The announcement was made by Steve Richardson, FWAA Executive Director, and Marla Dalton, CAE, NFID Executive Director and CEO.

“This partnership with the Outland Trophy offers NFID a timely platform to promote the importance of flu prevention to college football fans all across the U.S. and remind fans that annual flu vaccination is recommended for all individuals age six months and older,” said Dalton. Influenza is a highly contagious and sometimes life-threatening disease that affects between 5-20 percent of the U.S. population annually and accounts for more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 3,000-49,000 deaths in the U.S. each year. Getting an annual flu shot is the most effective way to prevent influenza.

As part of the public awareness campaign to help #FightFlu, the award will be rebranded as the **Outland Trophy presented by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases**. The social media hashtag #FightFlu will be visible on all Outland Trophy advertising, marketing, social media and public relations materials. Branded content and advertising will promote the award and the public awareness campaign in *Touchdown Illustrated* gameday programs at more than 1,000 college football games during the 2018 season, and in most of the major bowl game programs – including the College Football Playoff – as well as most NFL gameday programs.

University of Wisconsin All-American **Joe Thomas**, the 2006 Outland Trophy winner who retired earlier this year after a stellar 11-year career with NFL’s Cleveland Browns, will serve as the Outland Trophy #FightFlu ambassador. Thomas is the first player in NFL history to have a 10,363 consecutive snap streak and has been an avid supporter of annual flu vaccines. He will make media appearances on behalf of the #FightFlu public awareness campaign to remind people to get their annual flu shots.

Additionally, Thomas will announce the recipient of the 2018 Outland Trophy during ESPN’s *The Home Depot College Football Awards* on Thursday, December 6 from the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta, GA. The official presentation to the winner will be made at the Greater Omaha (Nebraska) Sports Committee’s Outland Trophy Banquet on Wednesday, January 9, 2019.

Forty Outland Trophy winners are members of the College Football Hall of Fame, and Thomas is on the ballot this year.

The **2018 Outland Trophy presented by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases** will be one of college football’s most anticipated award races this season, as University of Houston junior defensive tackle **Ed Oliver** attempts to join former University of Nebraska center Dave Rimington (1981, 1982) as the only two-time winners of the award. Oliver is the only sophomore to have ever won the award.

The preseason **2018 Outland Trophy Watch List**, featuring standout interior linemen on offense and defense from all 10 Division I Football Bowl Subdivision conferences and independents, will be announced on July 24, 2018. The three finalists will be featured on ESPN's *The Home Depot College Football Awards* and the winner will be announced in early December. The Outland Trophy Banquet follows in early January in Omaha, NE.

"The FWAA is delighted to partner with NFID in this Outland Trophy sponsorship. NFID is an influential thought leader promoting important public health messages around disease prevention and treatment. Using one of college football's oldest and most revered awards to help promote flu prevention is a winning play on any field as far as the FWAA is concerned," said Richardson.

The Outland Trophy, now in its 73rd year, is the third-oldest major college football award. Created in 1946 when Dr. John Outland presented the FWAA with a financial contribution to initiate the award, the Outland Trophy has been given to the best interior lineman in college football ever since. Dr. Outland, an All-American at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1890s, eventually took up practice in Kansas City, MO. An avid outdoorsman, Dr. Outland believed linemen did not get the credit they deserved and wanted an award to recognize them.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

Founded in 1973, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases across the lifespan. Visit nfid.org for more information.

About the Football Writers Association of America

Founded in 1941, the non-profit Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) consists of more than 1,300 members, including journalists, broadcasters, publicists and key executives in all areas of college football. Led by current President Stefanie Loh of the Seattle Times, longtime Executive Director Steve Richardson, and a board of veteran journalists, the association continues to grow and work to help college football prosper at all levels. Visit footballwriters.com for more information about the FWAA and its award programs.

The new Outland Trophy branding marks were developed by Torch Creative.

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#FightFlu

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