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Clark Atlanta University Wins Inaugural NCAA Division II Award

ATLANTA (FEBRUARY 10, 2010)— The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) this month awarded Clark Atlanta University’s (CAU) Department of Athletics its Division II Game Environment Award of Excellence for the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC). The award was established in 2009 to encourage institutions to promote civility, sportsmanship and a family friendly atmosphere during athletic contests.

Clark Atlanta’s award-winning approach centered on creating a sense of “belonging” in the community throughout the 2009 fall semester. “Not only did we want our fans to enjoy the competition, but we also wanted to create a ‘block-party’ atmosphere that clearly articulated our position as one of the many neighbors in our community,” said Director of Athletics, Dr. Tamica Smith Jones. In affirming its role as “neighbor,” CAU reached out to key segments of its local fan base. “In retrospect, we offered something for everyone,” Jones reflected. “More important,” she added, “we demonstrated our willingness to partner with our neighbors in tackling issues that are important to our community.

The initiative began with a day for area teens with appearances by two contemporary Hip Hop artists, “Fizz” and “J-Boog,” (formerly of B2K), both of whom became aware of the University’s outreach campaign and asked to join the effort. The two emphasized the importance of education during their visit. In another gesture, members of the Armed Forces were saluted during Military Appreciation Day, during which military personnel were admitted free of charge and honored for their sacrificial service.

As the season continued, so did CAU’s outreach. CAU partnered with a local housing complex, Magnolia Park, and health and wellness consultants from Visions Unlimited to reinforce the importance of healthy lifestyles among youth. The host for that event, and a key player in ensuring that the message was effectively communicated was Reverend Run of Run DMC. Finally, in an effort to encourage awareness and preventive screening, CAU’s Center for Cancer Research and Therapeutic Development sponsored Prostate Cancer Awareness day, during which former NFL greats Billie “White Shoes” Johnson, Terrence Mathis and Ken Oxendine signed autographs for the children from Magnolia Park. Even the game’s announcer joined the fun, sharing cancer awareness facts during time-outs.

“For us,” said Jones, “it’s not only about who we pull into our program. It’s equally important that we demonstrate our program’s willingness to go outside these walls and take our program into the community.” Jones and her colleagues have proven their willingness, making time for an array of activities from keynote speeches to CAU’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) tutoring elementary school students in preparation for Georgia’s State Proficiency Exam.

“This award is a direct result of the hard work and dedication of our student-athletes and athletics staff. It is a great honor and we will continue to be excellent in all we do,” said Jones.

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