



Game On! Athletes and Organizational Leaders Gather on Capitol Hill to Highlight the Importance of Concussion Safety in Schools in Support of The 29th Annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day

Olympic gold medalists Angela Hucles (soccer), Teresa Edwards (basketball) and Sarah Hughes (figure skating) and concussion expert Dr. Robert D. Stevens among panelists recognizing Girls & Women in Sports

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4, 2015 – To celebrate the 29th annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day (NGWSD), organizations and leaders from the National Girls & Women in Sports Day Coalition will gather in Washington, D.C. to recognize the advancement of girls' and women's sports and to discuss how to reduce the numbers of concussions in sports. *Game On!*, this year's theme, will focus on what schools can do to protect all student-athletes.

Reports from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) show a 60 percent increase in the number of reported concussions in the last 10 years. Concussions are routinely viewed as an issue affecting male athletes, but a significant number of female athletes also experience serious head injuries. The Women's Sports Foundation research shows that females participating in many high school sports now have a higher incidence rate of sport-related concussions than do males in similar sports*. Other topline findings include:

- Concussion rates in high school girls' soccer is double that of boys' soccer*
- Concussion rates in high school girls' basketball are one-third higher than in boys' basketball*
- Concussion rates in high school girls' softball are triple that of boys' baseball*

“The issue of concussions in sports is gaining traction in the press, but all too often, the headlines only focus on how concussions affect players in male-dominated sports, like football and hockey,” says Angela Hucles, two-time Olympic and World Cup medalist, soccer, and newly appointed President of the Women's Sports Foundation. “Our goal - and one of my first actions as the President of the Women's Sports Foundation - will be to make a discussion of guidelines that would minimize concussions for every athlete in every sport a top priority. Like so many issues, education is key, and that's where we will begin.”

Even more alarming is that there is emerging evidence that younger elite female athletes experience concussion rates at much higher rates than their high school counterparts. Female elite soccer players who are 11-14 years-old experience concussions at four times the rate of high school soccer female soccer players.**

“The statistics about concussions affecting female athletes and are alarming and should spur policymakers to pass legislation that will help keep all young athletes--both male and female--safe,” added Hucles. “It is past time for all athletes to enjoy the physical and emotional benefits of sports participation without risking their health.”

There is little evidence that explains the gender differences in the incidence of concussions. So far, most attention has been given to the differences of head and neck size and musculature. But ongoing research is still trying to determine how and if these differences play a role in the mechanism of the injury. There are also questions about the potential hormonal influences that might account for the disparities. Although more research is needed, some evidence suggests the possibility that female athletes present more concussion symptoms acutely, take a longer period to recover from concussions and report a greater number of and more prolonged post-concussion symptoms than male athletes.***

In addition, the panel of athletes, Title IX and concussion experts will discuss the significant achievements of pioneering women in sports that continue to inspire growing numbers of girls and women to play sports and lead physically active lives. Practical strategies to overcome hurdles that still prevent some girls and women to participate in sports will also be discussed.

Commemorating its 29th year in 2015, National Girls & Women in Sports Day honors and highlights the achievements of girls and women in athletics nationwide. In addition to the NGWSD discussion on Capitol Hill, thousands of sports educators, coaches, athletic directors, recreation directors, association members, sponsors, students and parents will come together to participate in events across the country to show their support of the 2015 NGWSD theme, "Game On!" All are welcome to participate and follow the day on social media using #NGWSD.

###

About National Girls & Women in Sports Day (NGWSD)

NGWSD began in 1987 as a day to remember Olympic volleyball player, Flo Hyman, for her athletic achievements and her promoting equality for women's sports. Hyman died of Marfan's Syndrome in 1986 while competing in a volleyball tournament in Japan. Since that time, NGWSD has become a day to acknowledge the past accomplishments of female athletes, recognize current sports achievements, the positive influence of sports participation, and the continuing struggle for equality and access for women in sports.

Since its inception, NGWSD has been celebrated annually in all 50 states with community-based events, award ceremonies, and activities honoring the achievements of female athletes and encouraging participation of girls and women in sports. NGWSD is organized by the members of the National Girls & Women in Sports Day Coalition. Women's Sports Foundation Founder Billie Jean King and Past Women's Sports Foundation Presidents Donna de Varona, Nancy Hogshead-Makar, Jessica Mendoza, Aimee Mullins, Dominique Dawes and Angela Hucles are among the champion women athletes that have contributed to the annual NGWSD activities alongside the Coalition organizations. For more information, please visit: www.NGWSDCentral.com.

About the National Girls & Women in Sports Day Coalition

The National Girls & Women in Sports Day Coalition is comprised of four premiere girls- and women-serving organizations in the United States including Girls Inc., SHAPE America, National Women's Law Center, and the Women's Sports Foundation.

* Marar M, McIlvain NM, Fields SK, Comstock RD. Epidemiology of Concussions Among United States High School Athletes in 20 Sports. *Am J Sports Med* 2012;40(4):747-755.

** O'Kane J, Spieker A, Levy MR, Neradilek M, Polissar NL, Schiff MA. Concussions Among Female Middle-School Soccer Players. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013;doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4518 (published online January 20, 2014).

*** Women's Sports Foundation, 2015, "Her Life Depends On It III, (Covassin, T. and Elbin, R. (2011).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kate Licht

Zeno Group

212 299 8989

Kate.Licht@zenogroup.com

* Marar M, McIlvain NM, Fields SK, Comstock RD. Epidemiology of Concussions Among United States High School Athletes in 20 Sports. *Am J Sports Med* 2012;40(4):747-755.

** O'Kane J, Spieker A, Levy MR, Neradilek M, Polissar NL, Schiff MA. Concussions Among Female Middle-School Soccer Players. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013;doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4518 (published online January 20, 2014).

*** Women's Sports Foundation, 2015, "Her Life Depends On It III, (Covassin, T. and Elbin, R. (2011).