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CONTACT: TOM CHIAPPETTA
203-984-4806

FAIRFIELD COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME NAMES NEWEST MEMBERS

STAMFORD, CT – The Fairfield County Sports Hall of Fame today announced its new class of inductees, naming six prominent sports figures into its three wings. The Hall of Fame, which is overseen by the Fairfield County Sports Commission, Inc., will honor the newly elected Hall of Famers with an induction ceremony at the Commission's 14th annual Sports Night awards dinner, Monday, Oct. 15 at the Stamford Marriott at 6 p.m.

With the 6 new inductees, the HOF has now recognized 90 county sports legends.

The class of 2018 honorees are:

Jackie Robinson Professional Wing: **A.J. MLECZKO GRISWOLD (NEW CANAAN), TRAVIS SIMMS (NORWALK)**

James O'Rourke Amateur Wing: **RASHAMEL JONES (STAMFORD), CLAIRE BETH TOMASIEWICZ NOGAY (WESTON)**

J. Walter Kennedy Community Service Wing: **JOHN KUCZO (STAMFORD), the late PAUL KUCZO SR. (STAMFORD)**

With Tomasiewicz Nogay's induction as the first Weston honoree, a total of 19 different towns are now represented in the Hall of Fame. With the Kuczcos being enshrined it will be the first time that a father and son have gone into the HOF together. They join Tom and Jim Penders as the only other father-son tandem.

Mleczeko Griswold went from the Winter Club outdoor rink in New Canaan to center ice at the Olympics to make a dream come true by earning a gold medal in women's ice hockey. In 1998 the sport of women's hockey made its Olympic debut in Nagano, Japan and A.J. and her United States teammates won the competition to make history. She was also a member of the 2002 squad that took home the silver medal and skated in three World Championships. As a captain at Harvard, she had a storied collegiate career with 128 goals and 257 points, both Top 5 in school history. She complemented her gold medal with an NCAA title in 1999 and by being named the women's college player of the year. Her 1998 team was selected for the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame in 2009. Mleczeko, who attended New Canaan Country School and the Taft School, joins teammate Sue Merz of Greenwich in the FC Sports Hall of Fame. A.J. works for NBC Sports and has been the TV analyst for Olympic Women's Hockey. She becomes the 8th Olympic gold medal winner to be enshrined in the FCSHOF.

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Simms becomes the first boxer to enter the FC Sports Hall of Fame. A product of the Norwalk local boxing clubs, he was trained by the legendary John Harris, who helped Simms to an impressive amateur career that included a National PAL title in 1995 and a New York Golden Gloves championship in '97. He turned pro at age 26 in 1998 and "Tremendous" Travis Simms worked his way up to be crowned as the county's first ever world champion. The southpaw had a record of 28-1, winning his first 25 fights, with 20 KOs. In his first fight under promoter Don King, Simms won the WBA world light middleweight title (now super welterweight division) in December 2003 in Atlantic City by knocking out undefeated champion Alejandro Garcia. He defended his title once before being stripped by the WBA of the belt in May 2005. He regained the title in 2007 with a victory over Jose Antonio Rivera, but eventually lost his world title status in July 2007 in a unanimous decision bout with Joachim Alcine at the Harbor Yard Arena in Bridgeport. He finished his career by winning three more fights, his last being in 2014. He was elected to the CT Boxing Hall of Fame in 2012.

Jones had an illustrious basketball career at both Trinity Catholic High in Stamford and the University of Connecticut, leading the Huskies in his senior season to their first national championship. As a four-year starting swingman at Trinity, the 6-foot-4 Jones was a three-time all-state selection and led the Crusaders to two FCIAC titles. He was named both the Gatorade state player of the year and top player in New England as a senior in 1995 when he averaged 27 points and 10 rebounds. His 2,301 career points are still the all-time boys' leader for the city of Stamford and fifth in the state overall. During his four-year career (1996-99) at UConn, Jones played in 132 games, which was second best all-time when he finished his playing days and now tied for 8th most in school history. The team won three Big East titles during his tenure, and he was named All-Big East Tournament as a junior. His best season came as a sophomore when he averaged 13 points per game. As co-captain of the 1999 team, he was the key 6th man on the squad that knocked off Duke for the NCAA title. Jones, who grew up in Port Chester, NY, was elected to the UConn Wing of the FC Sports Hall of Fame in 2009.

Tomasiewicz Nogay was one of the area's greatest all-around female athletes, starring in basketball, softball and field hockey in high school. She was the first girl in Connecticut to score 1,000 points in a basketball career, reaching that milestone as a junior. As a 5-9 center, the four-year starter at Weston High led her team to two undefeated seasons and back-to-back state titles in 1974 and '75. She averaged 30 points per game as a senior and ended her career with 1,603 points. Tomasiewicz then went on to play four years of basketball at Princeton, scoring a school-record 1,622 points, which was finally broken in 1990, and capturing three Ivy League titles during that time. She was the school's first female All-American basketball player and after her career ended she was drafted in the 6th round of the Women's Professional Basketball League. The multi-talented athlete also played softball for the legendary Raybestos Brakettes, joining the squad as a 16-year-old catcher, as well as spending time in the women's softball pro league. "C.B." was elected to the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 1992.

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John Kuczo has spent more than a half-century devoted to high school sports as a coach and administrator. While he was a highly-successful track and field and cross country coach at Rippowam High in Stamford, his real legacy is his longtime leadership of the county's premier athletic conference--the FCIAC. Spanning 48 years in total until his retirement in 2016, he was the organization's executive secretary/commissioner for 38 years starting in 1978, following a 10-year stint as the league's Secretary/Treasurer. Kuczo was responsible for growing and modernizing the FCIAC to make the conference the envy of the state. He also found time for six years to be the coordinator of athletics for two of Stamford's high schools and four middle schools. His coaching accomplishments were equally impressive as he founded the outdoor track and cross country programs when Rippowam opened in 1961 and later the indoor team. His teams won four state titles and combined 15 league crowns in cross country and outdoor. He has been recognized at the highest of levels including the National Coaches HOF in 2011, CT High School Coaches HOF (1993) and the CT Sportswriters Alliance Gold Key (2015).

Paul Kuczo Sr. helped shape a generation of young men in Stamford as a coach, mentor, athletic director and community leader. He began 40 years of continuous service to Stamford High School in 1928 when he became a three-sport coach. His teams over a 30-year span were perennial winners, racking up 881 total wins. In football the Black Knights totaled 190 wins and captured four state titles; 428 wins in baseball and a state title; in 23 years the basketball teams posted 263 victories. After retiring from coaching in 1958, Kuczo became the school's athletic director for the next 10 years. During that time, he became one of the key visionaries in creating both the FCIAC as one of its founding members and first president as well as helping to start the Connecticut High School Coaches Association. His dedication to Fairfield County and state high school sports won him a Sportswriters Alliance Gold Key in 1958 and he was named as one of the initial members of CHSCA HOF in 1977. He also is in the Stamford High School Wall of Fame (2002), but his greatest honor was having the gymnasium at SHS named after him. He passed away in 1970.

The list of previously enshrined FCSHOF inductees follows:

JACKIE ROBINSON PROFESSIONAL WING

2005-Julius Boros (Fairfield), Kristine Lilly (Wilton), Calvin Murphy (Norwalk), Steve Young (Greenwich)

2006-Bobby Valentine (Stamford), Mo Vaughn (Norwalk)

2007-Mike Gminski (Monroe), Charles Nagy (Fairfield)

2008-Chris Drury (Trumbull), Tim Teufel (Greenwich)

2009-Jennifer Rizzotti (New Fairfield), Charles Smith (Bridgeport)

2010-Garry Cobb (Stamford), John Hirschbeck (Stratford)

2011-John Bagley (Bridgeport), Bennett Salvatore (Stamford)

*Andy Robustelli (Stamford)-selected 2005, inducted 2011

2012-Wes Matthews (Bridgeport), Sue Merz (Greenwich)

2013-James Blake (Fairfield), Mark Hirschbeck (Stratford)

2014-Craig Breslow (Trumbull), Julie Chu (Fairfield)

2015-Ted Drury (Trumbull), Max Pacioretty (New Canaan)

2016-J.J. Henry (Fairfield), Rita Williams (Norwalk)

2017-Ken Green (Danbury), Randy LaJoie (Norwalk)

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JAMES O'ROURKE AMATEUR WING

2005-Dorothy Hamill (Riverside), Bruce Jenner (Newtown), Bill Toomey (New Canaan)
2006-Joan Joyce (Stratford), Walter Luckett (Bridgeport)
2007-Jerry Courville, Sr. (Norwalk), Donna Lopiano (Stamford)
2008-Gary Liberatore (New Canaan), Lou Saccone (Bridgeport)
2009-Pete Demmerle (New Canaan), Dick Siderowf (Westport)
2010-Alvin Clinkscales (Bridgeport), Amanda Pape (Stamford)
2011-Joe DeSantis (Fairfield), Ceci Hopp St. Geme (Greenwich)
2012-Ed Finnegan (Stratford), Harold Jensen (Trumbull)
2013-Dennis Paglialunga (New Canaan), Allyson Rioux (Stamford)
2014-Harry "Mickey" Connolly (Norwalk), Nadine Domond (Bridgeport)
2015-Lisa Brummel (Westport), Lambert Shell (Bridgeport)
2016-Manute Bol (Bridgeport), Maurice "Wilky" Gilmore (New Canaan), Bill Steinkraus (Darien)
2017-Phil Kydes (Norwalk), Bertha Ragan Tickey (Stratford)

J. WALTER KENNEDY COMMUNITY SERVICE

2005-Dave Bike (Bridgeport), Jerry McDougall (Trumbull)
2006-Ray Barry (Norwalk), Frank Vieira (Bridgeport)
2007-Nick Koules (Stamford), Bruce Webster (Bridgeport)
2008-Ralph King (Norwalk), Tom Penders (Stratford)
2009-Joe Benanto (Shelton), Terry Lowe (Greenwich)
2010-Mickey Lione, Jr. (Stamford), Vito Montelli (Trumbull)
2011-Charlie Bentley (Bridgeport), Albie Loeffler (Westport)
2012-Jim Penders, Sr. (Stratford), David Strong (Monroe)
2013-Don Cook (Fairfield), Earl Lavery (Fairfield)
2014-Efrain "Chico" Chacurian (Bridgeport), John "Sharkey" Laurenno (Stamford), Marty Roos (Fairfield)
2015-Jack Kvancz (Bridgeport), Angela Tammaro (Greenwich)
2016-Lou Marinelli (New Canaan), Mike Walsh (Stamford)
2017-Jim Dolan (Redding), Laddie Lawrence (Westport)

The Hall of Fame is housed at the University of Connecticut Stamford Campus in downtown Stamford. The Hall of Fame is open 6 days a week from 9 am-5 pm.

The Fairfield County Sports Commission, Inc. is a 501c (3) non-profit charitable and educational organization that promotes fitness, an active healthy lifestyle and personal development through sports. The Commission, other than the executive director position, is an all-volunteer group dedicated to creating and supporting programs for fitness awareness education, primarily centered on the 110,000 school age children in the 16 communities it serves. Its Chelsea Cohen Fitness Academy is the countywide umbrella for all of its programs. For more information, go to www.fairfieldcountysports.com.

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