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RE: Kurt Budke Court dedication to be held at the NJCAA Women's Basketball National Championship

The Salina Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that a dedication ceremony will take place at the NJCAA Women's Basketball National Championship where the Salina Bicentennial Center basketball floor will receive the official name, "Kurt Budke Court". The dedication will honor Kurt Budke prior to the 7pm Championship game (at approx. 6:30pm) on March 24 in the Arena of the Bicentennial Center.

Coordinated by Budke's lifelong friend and high school teammate, Mark Chaput, and Budke's Baseball Coach and friend, Larry Britegam, the dedication will honor Budke, unveil a plaque that will be placed in the arena highlighting Budke's life accomplishments, as well as showcase the floor with the "Kurt Budke Court" designation.

Highlights of Budke's life that bring meaning to the dedication are many, a few of them follow.

- Budke was born in 1961 in Salina, Kansas. He was married to Shelley (Balthazor) Budke. Together they raised three children Sara, Alex and Brett. His parents, John & Margie Budke of Salina. Budke attended Salina Sacred Heart High School from 1976-1979. He was instrumental in leading the Knights to winning a 3A State Championship in 1979.
- Budke was hired to the head coaching position at Trinity Valley Community College before the 1993-94 season and compiled 226 wins against just 16 losses while leading the Lady Cardinals to four national championships, one in 1999 at the Salina Bicentennial Center.
- In 2003, Budke became the youngest coach ever inducted into the NJCAA Hall of Fame.
- In 2002-03 Budke took over the program at Louisiana Tech University. The Lady Techsters compiled an 80-16 record with three-straight NCAA Tournament appearances under Budke's leadership.
- In 2005 he was hired as the head coach at Oklahoma State University. In his 7 years at Oklahoma State his teams went 112-83, and made three NCAA tournament appearances, highlighted by a Sweet 16 run in the 2008 NCAA Women's Division I Basketball Tournament. In his tenure at Oklahoma State the Cowgirls were ranked among the top 25 on several occasions.



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Mary Ellen Leicht, NJCAA Executive Director stated, "Kurt Budke was a true advocate for the two-year college student-athlete and is very deserving of this honor. The NJCAA is proud to be included in this very special dedication."

Budke died with four others in a plane crash November 17 while on a recruiting trip for his Oklahoma State University Women's Basketball Team. Budke's Assistant Coach Miranda Serna was among those lost. Serna was an NJCAA Athlete and later became an Assistant Coach with Budke at Trinity Valley Community College, Louisiana Tech University and Oklahoma State University. Miranda will also be remembered during the dedication.

The Women's Basketball National Championship will be held March 20-24, 2012 at the Salina Bicentennial Center. The event is hosted by the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce with the help of more than 250+ volunteers. Unfortunately three others, whose lives positively impacted the tournament, were lost in the 2011 year. A brief remembrance of each is listed below.

- Jo Musselwhite (63) - Scorekeeper Task Force Chair, Jo was a retired school teacher an advocate for youth, youth sports and a generous volunteer.
- Mary VanEmburch (59) - Mary worked at the USD #305 office for more than 20 years, and volunteered her time to the NJCAA Women's Tournament always assisting her husband, Jim VanEmburch.
- Sue Ross (77) - A pioneer for women's sports and former Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College women's basketball and softball coach, Ross was one of the first inductees into the NJCAA Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Budke, Serna, Musselwhite, VanEmburch, and Ross will be remembered throughout this year's NJCAA National Championship.

Tiffany Benien, Tournament Director states, "We are so blessed to have known Kurt, Miranda, Jo, Sue and Mary. The people-- those that we have lost and those that play on--bring meaning to basketball and to life. I can't express it enough... we truly appreciate all of those that work to make basketball a success each March in Salina."

For more information about the tournament contact:

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