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AAF President Anita L. DeFrantz Is One of Women's eNews 21 Leaders for the 21st Century 2006

NEW YORK, NY – February 13, 2006 – Anita L. DeFrantz has been selected as one of the Women's eNews 21 Leaders 2006. DeFrantz has paved the way for women at the highest levels of amateur sports.

A bronze medalist in rowing during the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, 10 years later DeFrantz became the first U.S. woman and the first African American in history to serve on the International Olympic Committee. She originally came to the committee's attention after protesting former President Jimmy Carter's boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. She had been training for the games in hopes of winning a gold medal.

"I was furious," she says. "As an American citizen it's my right to go or not to go." A 1977 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, DeFrantz took the lead among a group of athletes in an ultimately unsuccessful lawsuit against the U.S. Olympic Committee that tried to force the committee to send a team to Moscow.

DeFrantz has worked for equal opportunity in sports since joining the International Olympic Committee. In 1995 she successfully spearheaded the establishment of the committee's Women and Sports Commission. She campaigned for the addition of women's soccer and softball to the 1996 Atlanta Games as medal sports and women's water polo to the 2000 Sydney Games.

DeFrantz is one of 21 leaders selected by Women's eNews from a reader-nominated list of hundreds of individuals that dedicate their lives to improving the lives of women. The full list of leaders and their accomplishments is available at <http://www.womensenews.org/21leaders2006.cfm>

The Women's eNews 21 Leaders 2006 will be honored at an evening gala event on May 16, 2006 at Tavern on the Green in New York City's Central Park.

Women's eNews, at www.womensenews.org is a prize-winning nonprofit daily Internet-based news service supported by its readers, events, foundations and resales of its content. It is the definitive source of substantive news--unavailable anywhere else--covering issues of particular concern to women and their allies. Launched in 2000, the independent media outlet provides women, and those who care about women, the news they need to know. Rita Henley Jensen is founder and editor in chief.

“In a year where many believe there has been a profound scarcity of leadership, it is thrilling to once again find so many women and men who are dedicated to expanding values that cherish the lives of women,” says Rita Henley Jensen, editor in chief, Women’s eNews.

Born in Philadelphia, DeFrantz grew up in Indiana where she lived with her parents and three brothers until leaving for college. She received an academic scholarship to attend Connecticut College, in New London, Conn., and earned a B.A. there in 1974 in political philosophy. In 1981 DeFrantz abandoned a legal career to work for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee. In 1987, she became the president of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles and continues in that role today. There she oversees the spending of \$155 million in programs that benefit more than 1,000 youth sports organizations throughout Southern California.

As such, as an Olympic medalist, a chair of the International Olympic Committee's Women and Sports Commission, she not only is an extraordinary role model for young female athletes, she is a powerful mentor to those with the will and ability to excel.

As she says, while she is a woman of many firsts who is frequently called the most powerful woman in amateur sports, "I'm only successful if I'm not the last."

All of the 21 Leaders for the 21st Century honorees will be recognized during a gala evening in New York City on May 16. Other award winners include: Esther B. Hewlett, International Philanthropist; Ellen Malcolm, Political Fundraiser, Founder and President EMILY’s List; Josette Perard, co-founder Lambi Fund Of Haiti, to help poor women create economically and environmentally sustainable communities; Sheila Nevins, President HBO’s documentary and family division; Victor Rivas Rivers, Anti-Violence Advocate and Elizabeth Schweitzer, President Wharton Women, an undergraduate networking and mentoring organization.

The AAF is endowed with Southern California’s share of the surplus from the 1984 Olympic Games. The Foundation awards grants to youth sports organizations, initiates its own youth sports programs and manages the world’s premier sports library. AAF website: www.aafila.org.

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