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## **NCAA Award of Excellence Presented to LU**

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## NCAA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE PRESENTED TO LU

January 18, 2014

Lindenwood University is the winner of the NCAA's Division II Award of Excellence for its efforts to raise money and awareness for the cause of Sterling Thomas, a Lindenwood football player who suffered a serious spinal cord injury in October, 2012.

A record number of Division II schools were competing for the award, which was presented to President Jim Evans and Athletics Director John Creer January 18 at the NCAA Convention in San Diego, Calif. The award is presented for an activity or event that exemplifies excellence in any of the areas covered by the six attributes of Division II—learning, service, balance, passion, sportsmanship, and resourcefulness.

"We're very honored to receive such a prestigious award," said President Jim Evans. "I am proud of service and compassion demonstrated by our students, staff, faculty, and the community. We have been able to help the Thomas family. And we hope that this award will help us continue to help them."

Lindenwood's entry, called "Sellout for Sterling," centered on a basketball promotion in February, 2013. Hyland Arena was packed for a basketball game against Central Missouri, but football—and Sterling Thomas—was also on the mind of those in the crowd. Lindenwood told its student body and the community that they couldn't afford to miss the game...to see a special video message at halftime from Sterling Thomas. The short video documented Thomas' rehab at a facility in Atlanta, and contained a special thank-you message.

Creer said "Sellout for Sterling" was a labor of love for those who organized it. He said their many efforts included a series of promotional YouTube videos, lapel stickers, and sidewalk stickers to promote the game.

"It spread all over the community," Creer said. "It was very touching. There was a big restaurant promotion called 27 for 27, and we also received donations from across the country. Schools in our conference were also very generous. When we went on the road for a football game, they were passing the hat and making a donation."

Lindenwood receives a cash prize for winning the Award of Excellence, as well as a nationally-televised football or basketball game on CBS Sports Network in 2014-2015.

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