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**For Immediate Release**

**June 4, 2014**



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## Sacred Heart Wins Fourth Consecutive NEC Building Communities Award

**Somerset, NJ --** Sacred Heart takes great pride in its charitable and community service efforts, and for the fourth straight year has been honored for its outreach with the Northeast Conference (NEC) Building Communities Award.

The award, conceived by the NEC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), recognizes the institution which demonstrates the highest dedication to making an impact in the community through the efforts of its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. Over the course of the 2013-14 academic year, Conference members logged nearly 28,000 hours of community service.

“To be presented the NEC Building Communities Award for the fourth time in as many years is a testament to the character of the young men and women that make up Sacred Heart,” said Bobby Valentine, Sacred Heart’s Executive Director of Athletics. “I continue to be amazed by the time and energy our student-athletes to put into helping those less fortunate than ourselves, after the amount of effort it takes to be a successful college student and athlete. It is humbling to be associated with such people and I am extremely proud to be part of Pioneer Athletics.”

Sacred Heart itself donated 11,214 hours of community service, surpassing the school’s goal of 10,000 hours and over 3,000 more than the 2012-13 academic year. Pioneer student-athletes spent almost 7,000 hours mentoring students at the Dunbar and Waltersville schools in nearby Bridgeport, while also volunteering at Caroline House and the Hall Neighborhood House in Bridgeport. Select teams participated in events such as the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk in Westport, the Greater New Haven Heart Walk and the MS Walk in Westport to benefit the National MS Society.

“I am very proud of the community service efforts of our student-athletes, who do such an admirable job of balancing their responsibilities to their academics and teams with their tremendous efforts in bettering our community,” said Randy Brochu, Sacred Heart Student-Athlete Support Services Coordinator. “Seeing our Pioneers positively affect so many people’s lives, particularly those children whom they mentor and who appreciate and look up to them, makes me so proud to work with such quality student-athletes and coaches in an athletic department that puts so much importance on character and leadership.”

Along with Sacred Heart’s contributions to its local community, Central Connecticut finished the year with 4,767 hours of service, the second highest total in the Conference. Saint Francis U (3,383), Wagner (2,475) and St. Francis Brooklyn (2,092) also logged more than 2,000 hours during the 2013-14 academic year.

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“The Sacred Heart student-athletes continue to astonish me with their incredible commitment to giving back to their community,” said Noreen Morris, NEC Commissioner. “Over the past four years, they have donated 32,171 hours of their time as youth mentors, volunteers and participants in fundraising events. And they are not alone, in that same time period the entire NEC student-athlete population has collectively donated 98,970 hours of community service in their local areas. This is what makes working in college athletics so rewarding for all involved – while giving back to their communities and improving others’ lives our student-athletes learn they can make a lasting impact on those less fortunate through a series of selfless efforts.”

#### About the Northeast Conference

Now in its 33rd year, the Northeast Conference is an NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association consisting of 10 institutions of higher learning located throughout six states. Media coverage of the NEC extends to four of the largest markets in the United States - New York (#1), Pittsburgh (#23), Baltimore (#27), and Hartford/New Haven (#30). Founded in 1981 as the basketball-only ECAC Metro Conference, the NEC has grown to sponsor 22 championship sports for men and women and now enjoys automatic access to 14 different NCAA Championships. NEC member institutions include Bryant, Central Connecticut, Fairleigh Dickinson, LIU Brooklyn, Mount St. Mary’s, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, St. Francis Brooklyn, Saint Francis U and Wagner. For more information on the NEC, visit the league’s official website ([www.northeastconference.org](http://www.northeastconference.org)) and digital network ([www.necfrontrow.com](http://www.necfrontrow.com)), or follow the league on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Google+, all @NECsports.