



MISSOURI VALLEY CONFERENCE

2012 Most Courageous Award Release • January 27, 2012 • For Immediate Release

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JENI JONES TO RECEIVE MISSOURI VALLEY CONFERENCE MOST COURAGEOUS AWARD

ST. LOUIS -- Missouri Valley Conference Commissioner Doug Elgin announced today that Jeni Jones, associate head women's volleyball coach at Missouri State University, has been selected as one of the 2011-12 recipients of the league's Most Courageous Award.

The Missouri Valley Conference presents the Most Courageous Award to a past or present student-athlete, coach or university administrator who demonstrates unusual courage in the face of personal illness, adversity or tragedy and whose behavior reflects honor on the institution or the Conference. Individuals receiving the award might also have performed heroic feats or otherwise inspired others.

Jones, who survived a bout with Guillain-Barre syndrome, joins track and field student-athlete Chris McIntyre of Illinois State, who overcame acute lymphoblastic leukemia, as 2011-12 recipients.

The presentation of the award will take place during the women's basketball game between Indiana State and Missouri State tonight at JQH Arena.

"The best ambassadors for the Missouri Valley Conference are and will continue to be our student-athletes and the leadership shown by our athletic administrators and head coaches," said Elgin. "Each and every individual who has previously received our Most Courageous Award has inspired us with their spirit to overcome personal adversity.

PREVIOUS MVC MOST COURAGEOUS AWARD RECIPIENTS

2001	Mandy Kappel, Drake and Martha Chaput, Drake (Women's Basketball)
2002	Kwame James, Evansville (Men's Basketball)
2003	Megan Fong, Bradley (Women's Tennis)
2004	Kama Bennah, Creighton (Men's Soccer)
2005	Laura Dornboos, Illinois State (Women's Volleyball)
2006	Cori Meyer, Wichita State (Women's Volleyball)
2007	Scott Kerr, Drake (Athletics Trainer) and Shelby Lile, Bradley (Women's Cross Country/Track)
2008	Molly Arnold, Illinois State (Director of Admission) and Bob Boxell, Evansville (Sports Information Director)
2009	Dan Callahan, Southern Illinois (Head Baseball Coach)
2010	Abby Guerra, Evansville (Women's Soccer), Lance Irvin, Southern Illinois (Associate Head Men's Basketball Coach), Trish Marsh, Missouri State (Associate Head Women's Basketball Coach), Gabe Mullane, Indiana State (Football) and Aaron Thomas, Drake (Men's Basketball)
2011	Chris McIntyre, Illinois State (track and field) and Jeni Jones, Missouri State (Associate Head Volleyball Coach)

"We are grateful that we have the opportunity to recognize Jeni Jones. Throughout her battle with this rare disease, subsequent recovery and work with the Missouri State volleyball program, Jeni continues to display determination and perseverance, both on and off the court. She does the league a great service by accepting this deserved award."

In her 10th season at Missouri State, she joined the Bears coaching staff prior to the 2002 season after two years at league rival Illinois State. She was promoted to associate head coach at MSU following the 2005 season.

A star volleyball player at the University of Florida, Jones helped lead the Gators to three-straight Final Four appearances in 1996, 1997 and 1998. During her career, Florida also won four-straight Southeastern Conference titles.

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During her junior campaign, Jones was diagnosed with Guillian-Barre syndrome -- a rare disease of the peripheral nerves in which there is numbness and weakness in the limbs -- which can cause permanent paralysis.

Jones was bedridden losing all of her strength and contracted Bell's palsy. Receiving immediate treatment including large doses of antibodies, she began to improve. To the surprise of her doctors, fans and supporters, she was able to return to the court in September of 1998.

With her return to the floor, Jones won the NCAA's prestigious Honda Inspiration Award in 1999.

"Jeni's story was one that affected the volleyball community greatly at the time, but the ripple effect of her circumstances over 10 years later have had an even greater impact on those with whom she comes into contact daily," said Melissa Stokes, Missouri State head volleyball coach. "She has taught me how lucky I am each and every day to get to do the things I do. I am so grateful to work with someone who values life as she does."

After her playing days were over, Jones began her coaching career by joining Mary Wise's staff at Florida as a student assistant coach, and she would later serve as a club coach in the Gainesville Juniors program before going to Illinois State.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Jones earned a bachelor's degree in exercise and sport sciences from the University of Florida in December of 1999.

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