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**Contact: Julie Work
Director of Communications
jwork@nacda.com**

Jim Byers Recipient of the Division I-AAA ADA Gary Cunningham Lifetime Achievement Award

Cleveland, Ohio – Jim Byers, former director of athletics at the University of Evansville was selected as the recipient of the 2007 Gary Cunningham Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Division I-AAA Athletics Directors Association (ADA).

The award will be presented during the Division I-AAA ADA Meeting at the NACDA Convention in Orlando in June. It is the highest award presented by the association.

“It is a great pleasure to announce Jim Byers as the third recipient of the Division I-AAA Athletics Directors Association Gary Cunningham Lifetime Achievement Award,” says 2006-07 Division I-AAA ADA President **Pat Meiser**, director of athletics at the University of Hartford. “As an athletics administrator, Jim displayed excellent leadership, dedication and a commitment to making collegiate sports better. He is very deserving of this award.”

In his first year as athletics director at Evansville, Jim Byers was faced with something that no other AD could possibly prepare for, an airplane crash, killing The Aces’ men’s basketball team. Byers led the Aces through that tough time and, through 21 years at the helm, built a Division I program that reached the NCAA Tournament in men’s soccer, men’s basketball and baseball. During his time, the Aces also won three Midwestern Collegiate Conference all-sports championships and produced 21 Academic All-Americans. Under his leadership, the Evansville program grew to include eight varsity sports for both men and women.

Prior to taking over as athletics director in 1977, Byers was the head football coach for 11 years. As head coach, Byers led the Aces to four conference championships and one NCAA playoff appearance.

Prior to his retirement in May, 1998, Byers served on the NCAA Division II Football Regional Advisory Committee, the NIT Regional Advisory Committee and the NCAA Division I National Soccer Committee.

In 2000, a group of Byers’ former football players created the James A. Byers Athletic Student Scholarship. The University presents the scholarship each spring to a junior in any of the Aces’ varsity sports, for use during the student-athlete’s senior year.

Now in its sixth year, the Division I-AAA Athletics Directors Association’s mission is to enhance initiatives common to its Division I-AAA membership (the 94 Division I institutions that do not sponsor football), in particular, aspects related to their flagship basketball programs.

The Division I-AAA Athletics Directors Association is administered by NACDA, which is now in its 42nd year. NACDA is the professional and educational association for more than 6,100 athletics directors, associates, assistants and conference administrators at more than 1,600 institutions throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. Through its series of management seminars, clinics and workshops and publication of the bi-monthly magazine *Athletics Administration*, NACDA offers educational opportunities to its members. More than 2,000 athletics administrators annually attend the NACDA Convention. Additionally, NACDA operates the United States Sports Academy Directors’ Cup program, which honors the all-sports champion in each of the NCAA Divisions -- I, II and III -- and the NAIA, for a total of four trophies.

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