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Olympic Diver Louganis to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan

Stew Salowitz
Illinois Wesleyan University

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November 13, 2001

CONTACT: Stew Salowitz, 309-556-3206

Olympic Diver Louganis to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan

NOTE TO MEDIA: Greg Louganis will be available for the media at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 29, prior to his public address. The media availability will be in the Main Lounge of the Memorial Student Center.

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Olympic gold-medal winning diver Greg Louganis will be the featured speaker during AIDS Awareness Week at Illinois Wesleyan University from Nov. 26-30.

Louganis, who revealed in 1995 that he has AIDS, will speak at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 29, in the Main Lounge of the IWU Memorial Student Center. In his presentation, he will describe his process of coming out of the closet and publicly speaking about his life as a gay man and internationally-known athlete.

Louganis's presentation is sponsored by the IWU Student Senate, Co-Curricular Programs, the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, the Office of the President, the University Chaplain's Office, and the NCAA C.H.A.M.P.S./Life Skills Program.

Other events scheduled during AIDS Awareness Week, sponsored by the IWU Student Senate Charity and Welfare Committee, include:

- Tuesday, Nov. 27, 8:30 p.m., The Underground, Memorial Student Center - A panel of students, faculty, and members of the McLean County AIDS Task Force will hold a discussion on AIDS and AIDS awareness.
- Wednesday, Nov. 28, 11 a.m., Evelyn Chapel - Traditional AIDS Memorial Chapel Service will feature Dr. Njeri Mbugua, IWU professor of sociology, as well as many student leaders.
- Friday, Nov. 30, 10 p.m., Main Lounge, Memorial Student Center - Fourth Annual AIDS Charity Masquerade Ball. Tickets are \$5 with proceeds going to the McLean County AIDS Task Force. For more information on this event, please contact Nathan Marken of the Pride Alliance, 309-556-2642.

Greg Louganis Biography

Louganis, who began competing in diving at age 10, won his first Olympic medal at age 16, a silver medal on the platform in 1976. At 24, he became the first man in 56 years to win two gold medals in diving by winning both the platform and springboard events.

In Seoul, Korea, in 1988, competing against divers half his age, he became the first to win double gold medals for diving in two consecutive Olympics. At the Seoul Olympic Games he was awarded the Maxwell House/U.S. Olympic Committee Spirit Award as the Olympic athlete who had best exhibited the ideals of the Olympic spirit, demonstrated extraordinary courage and contributed significantly to the sport.

Louganis is a six-time World Champion and has held 47 National Championship titles. At the Pan Am Games he earned six gold medals and, in 1985, he was awarded the Sullivan Award as the nation's most outstanding amateur athlete.

Louganis currently speaks out for many organizations including youth clubs, drug and alcohol rehabilitation groups, and organizations for the dyslexic. During the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, Louganis also co-hosted segments on "Good Morning America", a first for an openly gay athlete.

His March 1995 autobiography, "Breaking the Surface," spent five weeks at No. 1 on the New York Times Best-Seller List and is a revealing account of a man struggling with far more than simply striving to be a great athlete. For years, Louganis's cheerful public persona never hinted at the personal troubles he has had to surmount - his HIV diagnosis, coming out as a gay man, domestic violence, substance abuse and dyslexia.

He then produced "Looking To the Light," a feature length video diary of his life after "Breaking the Surface" and details how his story has influenced so many people.

His second book, "For the Life of Your Dog" (January 1999), is about the challenges and joys of living with and caring for dogs, one of Louganis's favorite pursuits.