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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

**NFL Draft Pick To Honor The 240th
Anniversary of the Purple Heart**

***National Flag Foundation and Military Order of the Purple
Heart Join Forces With the National Football League To
Honor Our Nation's Combat Wounded Veterans***

PITTSBURGH – The National Flag Foundation, in coordination with the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the National Football League (NFL) announced that the 240th Pick in the 2022 NFL Draft presented by Bud Light will be made commemorating the 240th anniversary of the Purple Heart. The 240th Draft Pick will be announced on Saturday, April 30 at the NFL Draft in Las Vegas.

NFF and MOPH Representatives, led by Project Purple Heart Co-Chairmen/Pittsburgh Steeler legends Rocky Bleier and John Banaszak, alongside MOPH National Commander James McCormick, will announce the 240th selection at this year's NFL Draft, broadcast on NFL Network, ABC and ESPN.

Bleier, Banaszak and McCormick are veterans of our nation's armed forces – Bleier is a U.S. Army combat wounded veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, Banaszak is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, and McCormick is a multiple time Purple Heart recipient.

On behalf of the trio, Bleier said: *"We are honored to represent our nation's veteran community to commemorate the 240th anniversary of the inception of the Purple Heart award at this year's NFL Draft. Our nation's wounded veterans have sacrificed their full measure of devotion for our freedoms, and they deserve our thanks and recognition on this day and every day. We are grateful for the National Football League's continued support of America's combat wounded veteran community and for helping National Flag Foundation's efforts to mark this important anniversary."*

Today's announcement is the first in a series of events (part of a broader effort known as Project Purple Heart) coordinated by the NFF and MOPH to commemorate this year's anniversary of the inception of the Purple Heart Award and honor its recipients, which will culminate in a national day of unity— "Light to Unite"—on November 11, 2022.

On November 11, landmark buildings across America will light up red, white, blue and purple as a show of unity and support for our military heroes. – including One World Trade Center in New York. The "Light to Unite" will be coordinated in conjunction with affiliates of Building Owners and Manager Association International.

In 2021, Project Purple Heart began when the NFF highlighted a need for the creation of a Federal database to better honor and more reliably chronicle recipients of the Purple Heart Medal. The establishment of such a database will empower Veterans Service Organizations with an improved ability to identify and support combat wounded veterans. NFF's efforts prompted over a dozen national Veterans Service Organizations to support the cause. Soon after, the momentum led by NFF sparked bipartisan efforts within Congress to pass legislation that would expand Department of Defense's existing online Medals of Valor (MOV) database to include—for the first time ever—Purple Heart Award recipients. The MOV database that currently exists accounts for listing those who have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, Service Crosses, and Silver Star recipients, but not Purple Heart recipients. Matching legislative proposals to accomplish this important goal are now before both the U.S. Senate and House Representatives.

About Co-Chairman Rocky Bleier

Rocky Bleier's life story - a gripping tale of courage on both the football fields of America and the battle fields of Vietnam - has held audiences in rapt attention for years. Yet, the motivational message behind it, detailing how ordinary people can become extraordinary achievers, defines success in the new American century.

With the same optimism, sense of humor and steadfast determination that were his trademarks as a Pittsburgh Steelers running back, Rocky Bleier takes audiences from his early years through his professional career and talks about the lessons he learned along the way... lessons that we all can benefit from.

Not falling within the ideal of what a running back should look like, Bleier had to run harder and play smarter to be able to stand out. Despite his drive and ability to make the big play, the Pittsburgh Steelers only considered him a late round pick. But before the season ended that first year, he was drafted again...this time by the United States Army. At the height of the Vietnam War, Bleier was thrust into combat early and was seriously wounded when his platoon ran into an ambush. Receiving wounds from both rifle fire and grenade fragments in his legs, he was barely able to walk and his professional football career seemed to have ended before it began.

For more than two years, he drove himself. Little by little he overcame obstacles and fought his back. He not only made the Pittsburgh Steelers, but also eventually became a starting running back on a team that won four Super Bowls and became the greatest football team of the 20th century.

The hard lessons Rocky Bleier learned early in his life, which helped him, overcome adversity and reach his goals, have paid off after football. What makes Rocky Bleier so popular as a speaker is his ability to translate core values in his speech, "Be the Best You Can Be". With real-world practicality, he points out ways to reach new levels of inner-confidence.

Whether it is career development for corporate executives, enhancing sales and marketing skills for sales teams, offering inspiration for young professionals or practical advice to student athletes, Bleier's delivery is a winner. His message consistently brings audiences to their feet and re-energizes them for personal and work challenges ahead. His advice is not about avoiding life's twists and turns but conditioning one's self to lean into them and to incorporate the resulting energy in realizing goals.

About Co-Chairman John Banaszak

John Banaszak's life has been a cycle of serious challenges and accomplishments, and new challenges continue to motivate him on a daily basis.

It started in January of 1969 following high school in Seven Hills, Ohio. At a time when it was not popular to serve your country, John enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and it changed his life forever. He became a serious student of motivation during boot camp at Parris Island, SC. "Not in my wildest imagination did I ever think that my decision to join the Marine Corps would last a lifetime. In 2017 I was inducted into the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame. I owe everything I have accomplished to the Marine Corps."

After his two years of service he enrolled at Eastern Michigan University as a walk on football player and he quickly earned a football scholarship. After four years at Eastern he was awaiting the 1975 National Football League draft.

In 1975, the NFL drafted 476 players in 17 rounds and John was not one of them. He signed as an "un-drafted rookie free agent" with the defending Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steelers. He chose the Steelers because he too wanted to be a champion. During his rookie season, the sportswriters wrote that he was an overachiever. John however, never considered what he did to be an "over" achievement because he believed that he could do it all along. He had just accomplished what he had set out to do. He realized his dream of being a champion when the Pittsburgh Steelers won three more Super Bowls in the next five years. John started at defensive end in both Super Bowl XIII and XIV.

After retiring from professional football in 1985 it didn't take him long to find new challenges. He started his own business and eventually pursued a career as a college football coach. After four years as a Defensive Coordinator, in 1995 he was named the National Defensive Coordinator of the Year, he became the Head Coach at Washington and Jefferson College. In his four years as Head Coach, his team won four conference championships, made four NCAA playoff appearances, and compiled a record of 38 wins and only 9 losses. He was also named Conference Coach of the Year award all four years.

In 2003 John joined the staff at Robert Morris University as an assistant coach, In 2014 he became the Head Football Coach. He retired from coaching at the end of the 2017 season.

Today, John continues to motivate himself on a daily basis. John has always enjoyed the challenge of speaking to a variety of audiences. He has presented over 200 speeches on the dangers of drugs and alcohol to students, parent groups and community organizations.

In the business arena, he has spoken to both small companies and large corporations, on such topics as "You Were Hired to be Successful", "Be a Leader, Be a Champion" and "The Pursuit of Happiness".

About James McCormick

James McCormick served our nation in the United States Army for 22 years, including service in Operation Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. Mr. McCormick was wounded three times in battle and for his service was awarded the Silver Star, 3 Bronze Stars with Valor, 2 Meritorious Service Medals, and 3 Purple Hearts.

For his leadership, McCormick has been awarded the 2012 Jefferson Award, 2012 Congressional Medal of Honor society Service Before Self Award, 2014 Distinguished West Virginian Award, TBI Network Veteran of the Decade, and has served as the 2019 Ford Oval of Honor and USDA 100th Anniversary Veteran Day Keynote Speaker in 2019.

Today, Mr. McCormick serves as National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and as Executive Director for Vets4Vet Leadership. He is married to Heather Tucker and has 8 children and 8 grandchildren - two of his sons and a daughter-in-law currently serve in the Armed Forces.

About the National Flag Foundation

The NFF is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit and non-political foundation dedicated to education about the American Flag and honoring those who have served to support our country and its national symbol. It is a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania based national foundation and has been in existence for over half a century. It is nationally recognized and has been the subject of recognition by multiple United States Presidents, as well as the United States Senate and Congress.

For more information on the National Flag Foundation's "National Day of Unity" and buildings participating in this event please visit www.nationalflagfoundation.org or #NationalFlagFoundation.