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Denver Broncos Quarterback Tim Tebow Joins Forces with AANS Neurosurgeons and ThinkFirst to Promote Head Injury Prevention in Children

DENVER (April 12, 2011) – In an effort to protect children from bicycle-related head injuries, more than 200 Denver-area children, grades preschool-5 attended the Community Kids Bike Helmet Day at INVESCO Field on Sunday, April 10, and were fitted with free bike helmets by 85 ThinkFirst Chapter members from across the country and AANS neurosurgeons. And as a big bonus, they were treated to a special appearance by Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow, who spoke to them about playing it safe, followed by a question and answer session. His young fans were especially enthralled when he recounted his own personal experience about suffering a serious concussion on the playing field during a college game. “The children were thrilled to meet him and get their picture taken with him, but the most important thing is that Tebow instilled the importance of wearing helmets to his young, and captivated audience,” said Gail L. Rosseau, MD, an AANS and ThinkFirst board member and spokesperson.

The event was cosponsored by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. The Integra Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Integra LifeSciences Corporation, as well as Elekta, a supplier of brain mapping technology for brain injury, both awarded grants to ThinkFirst in support of this injury prevention event.

This event launched the official start of the Eighth Annual National Neurosurgery Awareness Week (NNAW), a celebration that coincides with AANS Annual Scientific Meetings. The 2011 NNAW theme is *There’s Always Another Game, but You Only Have One Brain*.

There were an estimated 446,788 sports-related head injuries treated at U.S. hospital emergency rooms in 2009. This number represents an increase of nearly 95,000 sports-related injuries from the prior year. Bicycle-related head injuries saw a substantial increase in emergency room visits – from 70,802 in 2008 to 85,389 in 2009, with nearly half incurred by children age 14 and younger.

“The AANS and ThinkFirst encourage the use of helmets for every wheeled sport, including biking, skateboarding, inline skating, and when riding a scooter,” said ThinkFirst Chairman Mark R. Proctor, MD.

“Bicycling is the number one cause of sports-related head injuries. There are about 600 bicycling deaths a year, with two-thirds attributed to traumatic brain injury,” said AANS President James T. Rutka, MD, PhD.

“Approved bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent, yet only about 50 percent of cyclists wear a helmet when they ride, and even fewer wear them correctly. It is essential that the helmet fit properly so that it doesn’t fall off while riding or if you take a fall,” added Dr. Rosseau.

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Founded in 1931 as the Harvey Cushing Society, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) is a scientific and educational association with more than 8,000 members worldwide. The AANS is dedicated to advancing the specialty of neurological surgery in order to provide the highest quality of neurosurgical care to the public. All active members of the AANS are certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (Neurosurgery) of Canada, or the Mexican Council of Neurological Surgery, AC. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned

with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain, and peripheral nerves.

The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation, located in Naperville, Illinois, has chapters throughout the US and in 18 other countries, dedicated to educating children and teens on reducing their risk for traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. US chapters give over 7,000 presentations each year in the classroom and at community safety fairs, helping kids learn about the brain and spinal cord and why it is important to “use your mind to protect your body.” The ThinkFirst Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization; for more information go to www.thinkfirst.org or call 1-800-THINK56.