



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**JACQUELYN DECELL ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM GSHF**  
**April 30 Will Mark End of Ten Years at Museum for Executive Director**

MACON, GA - Jacquelyn Decell will retire from her position as the Executive Director of the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame effective April 30, 2010. Decell has served as the director of the nation's largest state sports museum for the past six years and has been employed by the Hall of Fame for over a decade. Prior to being hired as Executive Director, she served as both Interim Director and Director of Operations.

During Decell's tenure at the GSHF, the museum has established itself as one of the anchors of Macon's downtown museum district. She has been instrumental in garnering international acclaim for the Hall of Fame and has led the hall as it took steps to become more inclusive and broaden its educational reach. Under Decell the GSHF Foundation has grown into an active participant in the museum's activities and has become an effective fundraising organization.

"While the hall of fame had been around for many years, the museum was relatively new when Jackie took over", said GSHF Authority Chariman Bobby Pope. "She took what was really a fledgling organization and built it into the institution we are all so proud of today."

The GSHF has been inducting Georgia's best athletes since 1956, but in 2005 at Decell's urging and with strong leadership from members of the GSHF Authority, the board decided to redress a wrong by inducting some of those that had been excluded from the hall many years earlier. For the next five years, two additional inductees were admitted to the hall. These inductees were athletes and coaches from schools that competed in the Georgia Interscholastic Association – the state's governing body of athletics for African-American schools during segregation.

In addition to becoming more inclusive racially, a record number of women are among the 86 inductees that will have been enshrined during Decell's time at the hall. Each of these 86 have had the privilege of participating in the ever evolving and improving induction ceremonies that have come to be signature events for the GSHF. The induction ceremonies are only one of many areas where Decell's legacy will endure for years to come.

In the past 6 years, the hall has also put a much greater emphasis on educational programming for both adults and children – particularly in the area of health and wellness. In 2006, the GSHF kicked off the 10,000 Steps walking program for adults. Participants from all parts of Middle Georgia took part in the program that was recognized in both houses of Georgia's General Assembly and won the Live Healthy Georgia/Be Active award from the state's Department of Human Resources.

The 10,000 Steps program has since evolved into the Steps For Life children's program that has been offered to thousands of students throughout Georgia. Steps For Life encourages students to be active and to eat a healthy diet. The program was recently awarded first prize in the educational programming category at the International Sports Heritage Association's annual conference.

Decell cemented the GSHF's close relationship with the International Sports Heritage Association (ISHA) by extending the invitation for them to hold their 2007 Annual Conference in Macon. By all accounts it was one of the best conferences the organization has ever held, and Decell was subsequently invited to serve on ISHA's board of directors. In that capacity, she served as chairman of both the 2008 and 2009 Conference Committees offering her expertise in event planning to further improve these events.

An increased emphasis on fundraising has also marked Decell's time at the hall. With Decell's leadership, the GSHF Foundation has grown and embraced its responsibility as the GSHF's fundraising arm. Through private donations, fundraising events, and charitable grants, the Foundation has been able to offer substantial assistance towards the museum's exhibits, educational programs, and general operating costs. As a result of the Foundation's efforts, hundreds of thousands of dollars in capital improvements to the museum's building have been made possible. Responsible fiscal management and meticulous caretaking of the GSHF facility will be hallmarks of Decell's years at the GSHF.

After working past the age when many choose to retire, Decell is looking forward to spending more time with her family and at her cottage on Sullivan's Island, SC. She has also recognized some needs in her hometown of Wrightsville, GA with which she would like to help and will enjoy being able to be more involved with her church. Of course, she will always be eager to continue her work with sports museums and downtown development as she has the opportunity.

"I've truly enjoyed my work with the Hall of Fame, so this has been a very difficult decision for me. It's exciting to think about having more time to devote to my family and to some of my other interests, though", commented Decell.

Decell's contributions to the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame will be recognized at the 2010 Induction Ceremony on Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at the Macon City Auditorium. Ticket order forms for the ceremony are available for download on the GSHF website at [www.gshf.org](http://www.gshf.org).

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