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Office of University Communications

August 26, 2014

Internationally Renowned Advocate & Evangelist to Visit Gardner-Webb University

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – The Dimensions program at Gardner-Webb University is pleased to announce the kickoff speaker for the 2014-2015 academic year. Joni Eareckson Tada, the Founder and CEO of Joni and Friends International Disability Center, will share her testimony of hope and perseverance on Tuesday, Sept. 2 at 9:25 a.m. in the Paul Porter Arena, located inside the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center (LYCC). The event is free and open to the public.

Tada is an international advocate for people with disabilities. A diving accident in 1967 left Joni Eareckson, then 17, a quadriplegic bound to a wheelchair. After two years of rehabilitation, she emerged with new skills and a fresh determination to help others in similar situations.

“Every year, I try to schedule at least one Dimensions speaker in which disability awareness is part of their focus,” said Dr. Tracy Jessup, vice president of the Office of Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. “Joni’s life is a testimony to the fact that nothing is impossible with God. I believe she will challenge students not to let any obstacle hinder them from doing what God has called them to do and to make a difference in our world.”

Following her accident, Joni spent long months learning how to develop artistic skills by painting with a brush between her teeth. Since her rehabilitation period, she has written over 50 books, including her best-selling autobiography “Joni” (later made into a feature film), which has been translated into many languages. Tada has also visited more than 47 countries to encourage those with disabilities. Her latest book, “Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story,” chronicles her relationship with her husband, Ken, whom she married in 1982.

For more than 30 years, Tada has hosted the short-feature radio program “Joni and Friends,” which airs on more than 1,000 outlets. In 2012, the National Religious Broadcasters inducted her into its Hall of Fame. That same year, the Colson Center on Christian Worldview awarded Joni its prestigious “William Wilberforce Award.” She has been interviewed on “Larry King Live,” “ABC World News Tonight,” and in magazines such as Christianity Today and World Magazine.

“Part of the beauty of Joni’s ministry is to remind people with disabilities that God has not abandoned them,” Jessup shared. “God offers them love, hope, and salvation.”

Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 48 hours prior to the event. Please call 704.406.4264 or email servicerequests@gardner-webb.edu with your request.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.