January 19, 2010

News Release

For Immediate Release

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to Headline MSU Public Affairs Conference

Environmental business leader and advocate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will speak at the sixth annual Public Affairs Conference, themed “The New Economy: Promise and Peril.” Kennedy will speak at 10 a.m., April 16 in JQH Arena. Missouri State, Leadership Springfield and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board collaborated to make Kennedy’s appearance at the conference possible.

Kennedy’s reputation as a resolute defender of the environment stems from a litany of successful legal actions. He was named one of TIME magazine’s “Heroes for the Planet” for his success in helping Riverkeeper lead the fight to restore the Hudson River. The group’s achievement helped spawn more than 160 Waterkeeper organizations across the globe. In 2009, he was named one of Rolling Stone’s “100 Agents of Change.”

The conference, including the speech, is free and open to the public, but tickets are required to attend Kennedy’s keynote address. Following are details concerning obtaining tickets:

- All seats are general admission, first come first served. Limit four tickets per person. For groups of 10 or more, contact the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, (417) 864-1049.
- Tickets will be available to MSU students, faculty and staff March 1 and 2. Tickets will be available to the public starting March 3.
- Tickets must be picked up in advance as there will not be a Will Call window open for this event.
- Tickets available at:
  - MSU Ticket outlets (JQH Arena, Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts, and the Plaster Student Union ticket office)
  - Springfield-Greene County Park Board (Springfield-Greene County Park Board’s main office, Chesterfield Family Center, Doling Family Center, Dickerson Park Zoo Administration office)
  - All Springfield-Greene County Library Branches (The Library Center, Library Station, Brentwood Branch Library, Midtown Carnegie Branch Library, Park Central Branch Library, Ash Grove Branch Library, Fair Grove Branch Library, Strafford Branch Library, Willard Branch Library, Republic Branch Library)
- Tickets may be ordered through the ticket office (417-836-7678), but a $5 shipping and handling fee will apply.

“We are extremely pleased that this partnership will bring such a dynamic speaker like Mr. Robert Kennedy to cap off our Public Affairs Conference,” said Dr. Mahua Barari Mitra, provost fellow for public affairs and this year’s conference chair. “His talk, focusing on a scarce natural
resource like water, is directly related to our theme, ‘The New Economy: Peril and Promise.’ As the economies around the world grow and millions are lifted out of poverty, water is going to be an increasingly scarce commodity. Experts believe that without effective management of our water resources, this century might be seeing water-related conflicts that would imperil the future of mankind. Our economy and indeed the world economy depend on how this resource is managed.”

Kennedy has worked on environmental issues across the Americas, and has assisted several indigenous tribes in Latin America and Canada in successfully negotiating treaties protecting traditional homelands. He is credited with leading the fight to protect New York City's water supply. The New York City watershed agreement, which he negotiated on behalf of environmentalists and New York City watershed consumers, is regarded as an international model in stakeholder consensus negotiations and sustainable development.

“Leadership Springfield is excited to partner with Missouri State University and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board in bringing Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to Springfield,” said David Hall, Leadership Springfield president. “A collaboration of this type is a perfect way for us to celebrate our 25th year of inspiring, developing and connecting leaders.”

Among Kennedy’s published books are the New York Times bestseller “Crimes Against Nature” (2004); “The Riverkeepers” (1997); and “Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr: A Biography” (1977). His articles have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, Rolling Stone, Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, The Nation, Outside magazine, the Village Voice and many other publications. His award-winning articles have been included in anthologies of America’s best crime writing, best political writing and best science writing.

“Every citizen of southwest Missouri has a stake in the game when it comes to preserving our natural resources,” said Parks Director Jodie Adams. “I believe Mr. Kennedy’s passion for educating the importance of environment and water resources is paramount to our current focus of protecting our water aquifers and watershed supplies for generations to come. This is especially timely as our parks system is entering into significant renovations of our local lakes, waterways and streams throughout Greene County.”

The sixth Annual Public Affairs Conference will convene April 13-16 with its theme focusing on issues related to the severe financial crisis which triggered a global economic meltdown not seen since the depression of the 1930s. The conference will provide the campus and Springfield community an opportunity to discuss and debate pressing issues in an interdisciplinary format with leaders and experts in a variety of fields. Through a diverse program of keynote sessions, panel discussion and special events, the conference will allow attendees to reflect on the perils and promises of the new economic realities.

For a list of speakers and schedule of events, visit the Public Affairs Conference website. Questions concerning tickets for the Kennedy event should be directed to the Park Board at (417) 864-1049.