Meet the Unsung Heroes Helping to Prevent Measles and Meningitis

Bethesda, MD (January 22, 2015) - The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) will honor Samuel L. Katz, MD, F. Marc LaForce, MD and Richard J. Duma, MD, PhD for their significant and lasting contributions to public health through scientific achievement at the 2015 NFID Awards Gala on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 in Bethesda, MD.

Dr. Samuel L. Katz, recipient of the 2015 Maxwell Finland Award for Scientific Achievement, is an innovative physician-scientist whose pioneering work on the development and promotion of the Edmonston measles virus vaccine has revolutionized children’s health and reduced childhood mortality worldwide. Dr. Katz successfully introduced measles vaccine to a small village in Nigeria where people were used to their children dying from measles. He has achieved what most investigators dream of: translation of his research into a global resource that has improved public health and the lives of many.

"As a dedicated mentor and teacher and an active citizen of the global scientific community, Dr. Katz has touched the lives of countless children, families, students and colleagues. The work behind the development of the measles vaccine is a triumph over the challenges that continue to plague vaccine development today and provides valuable insight for others developing vaccines for today’s most infectious diseases," noted Nancy C. Andrews, MD, PhD, Dean and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Duke University School of Medicine.

Recipient of the 2015 Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Humanitarian Award, Dr. F. Marc LaForce, is being recognized for his work in eliminating an epidemic that has inflicted suffering and death to the people of sub-Saharan Africa for millennia. He created and implemented MenAfriVac, a vaccine that prevents Group A meningococcal meningitis, providing profound humanitarian service to those disadvantaged people.

"It has been said that illnesses in the developing world are ‘the forgotten problems of forgotten people.’ In this case the problem had long been recognized, but not acted upon. Dr. LaForce changed that - his extraordinary accomplishments are producing a grand impact on human health,” stated William Schaffner, MD, NFID Past-President and Professor of Preventive Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

Dr. Richard J. Duma, an original founder of NFID, will be recognized with the 2015 John P. Utz Leadership Award for his leadership in the fight against infectious diseases. As the founding president of NFID in 1973, Dr. Duma has remained involved and continues to contribute to the mission of NFID.

For additional information, or to purchase tickets to the dinner, visit http://www.nfid.org/2015awards or contact awards@nfid.org.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases across the lifespan. For more information, visit nfid.org.