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## **SUNS NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR SPIRIT OF COTTON AWARD**

*Team pays tribute to Ring of Honor member Cotton Fitzsimmons with award for high school hoops coaches*

**PHOENIX** – For the seventh consecutive year, Phoenix Suns Charities will honor the memory of former Suns head coach Cotton Fitzsimmons with The Spirit of Cotton Award.

The award recognizes a high school basketball coach who consistently demonstrates the best qualities of coach, educator, mentor and community leader. These are the same characteristics that made Cotton Fitzsimmons such a successful and respected coach. All high school head basketball coaches in Arizona are eligible to be nominated. Nominations can be made by a community member, fellow coach/teacher, school administrator or student-athlete.

The Spirit of Cotton Award winner will receive:

- A Phoenix Suns Charities grant of \$10,000 for use in the school's athletic programs
- A commemorative plaque and ring

Nominations for The Spirit of Cotton Award are being accepted through March 9, 2012. The winner will be announced and honored at the Suns regular season finale against the San Antonio Spurs on April 25. For more information on The Spirit of Cotton Award, or to download a nomination form, please visit [SunsCharities.org](http://SunsCharities.org).

Previous Spirit of Cotton Award recipients include Byron Maynes of Salome High School in Salome (2011) David Lopez of St. Mary's High School in Phoenix (2010), Howard Mueller of Phoenix Greenway High School (2009), Karen Self of Seton Catholic High School in Chandler (2008) and Gary Ernst of Mesa Mountain View High School (2007).

Fitzsimmons, who passed away in July 2004, had been an integral part of the franchise since 1970, with his first of three stints as the team's head coach. He returned to the Suns in 1987 as director of player personnel. In 1988-89, Fitzsimmons added coaching to his duties with the Suns and engineered what, at the time, was the third-biggest one-season turnaround in NBA history, converting the Suns from a 28-win non-playoff team to a 55-win team that advanced to the 1989 Western Conference Finals.

Over a 20-year NBA coaching career, Fitzsimmons won 832 games with four different franchises. He was twice honored as NBA Coach of the Year (1979 with Kansas City, 1989 with the Suns).

Suns fans, Bring Your Game Face! The Suns will host the Dallas Mavericks on Monday, January 30 at US Airways Center, with tip-off set for 7 p.m. Single game tickets are still available and can be purchased at [Suns.com/tickets](http://Suns.com/tickets) or by calling 1-800-4NBA-TIX.

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