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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release – Walk of Life and CCHA

On May 15, 2010, team CCHA will walk/run in the Cardiac Health Foundation of Canada's "Walk of Life". Our goal is to raise \$10,000 for the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance and all money raised will support important programs such as the 'Beat Retreat' camp. Also, if we reach our fundraising goal, the Mikey Network has generously agreed to donate a defibrillator to our organization!

Background

Congenital heart disease (CHD) is the world's leading birth defect. About 1 in 100 Canadian children are born with CHD. Across Canada, there are an estimated 180,000 people with CHD. In fact, more Canadians suffer from CHD than multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS and cerebral palsy combined!

In the past, people born with a heart condition had a 20% survival rate and few made it past their teens. Now, thanks to outstanding medical advances, more than 98% survive into adulthood – resulting in a growing population of young adults who require life-long cardiac care. At least half face the prospect of complications, multiple surgeries, and/or premature/sudden death.

Until recently, CHD patients lacked access to rehabilitation programs specially designed to meet their unique needs. When people think of "Cardiac Rehabilitation" most think of elderly heart attack survivors walking on treadmills. But CHD patients of all ages are now taking part, and benefitting. The programs teach patients how to exercise properly and safely, in medically supportive environment; as well as provide education about healthy eating, something that even Congenital Heart patients have to follow.

More information about CHD and the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance

A congenital heart defect is a structural problem (or defect) in the heart that is present at birth. They were once considered a childhood disease, when the life expectancy was limited to a few weeks, months, and in a few cases, several years. The amazing progress over the last 50 years in diagnosis, surgery, and in the newer interventional catheter-based procedures have vastly improved survival, such that now more than half of people living with CHD are adults.

The Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance (CCHA) is:

- ♥ A non-profit volunteer-based charitable organization made up of pediatric and adult patients with a congenital heart defect, their friends, families, and the medical community
- ♥ Founded 2004
- ♥ Run by a board of 4 directors and 7 executive officers
- ♥ Funding to date is through donations

We aim to provide support to Canadians with CHD by:

- ♥ Raising the awareness and understanding of CHD in Canada
- ♥ Advancing congenital heart disease-related research
- ♥ Improving transition from the pediatric to adult system
- ♥ Providing educational information and resources on CHD
- ♥ Provide peer support, mentoring and outreach programs to patients and families
- ♥ Providing a social network to talk to other CHD patients

Some of our accomplishments:

- ♥ Website (www.cchaforlife.org)
- ♥ Life insurance for members 40+ and low-cost travel insurance that covers pre-existing conditions
- ♥ Collaborative Research Initiative with Heart & Stroke Ontario
- ♥ Partnership with Sick Kids Hospital for "Family Education Day"
- ♥ "Fund a Fellow" movie night
- ♥ Participation in the Canadian Cardiovascular Conference, Canadian Patient Summit, Toronto Congenital Cardiac Centre for Adults annual patient conference, and the International Congenital Heart Coalition
- ♥ "Beat Retreat" adult camp
- ♥ CCHA Social Nights

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