

## HEPATITIS C AWARENESS CAMPAIGN 2005 PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2005

CONTACT: Lorren Sandt – 1.877.737.4372



### **Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program Launches Hepatitis C Awareness 2005 Campaign: 100,000 Letters to Congress**

Oregon City, Oregon – The Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program (HCCAP) enthusiastically announces the launch of the Internet-based **Hepatitis C Awareness 2005 Campaign** ([www.hepcchallenge.org](http://www.hepcchallenge.org)), which coincides with the May observance of National Hepatitis Awareness Month. The campaign is focused on raising hepatitis C awareness in the minds of the general public, elected officials, and policy-makers. Hepatitis C is the most common chronic, blood-borne infection in the United States, and is the leading cause of chronic liver disease among Americans. An estimated 3.9 to 4.5 million Americans have been infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV), with nearly 30,000 new cases occurring each year.

The centerpiece of the **HCCAP Hepatitis C Awareness Campaign** is an interface that allows users to easily send their Congressional representatives an e-mail message expressing concern about the hepatitis C epidemic. HCCAP has set a goal of 100,000 messages to be sent to Congress during the month-long Hepatitis Awareness observance. In addition, the HCCAP site has information about the recently introduced *Hepatitis C Epidemic Prevention and Control Act*, which mandates a comprehensive federal hepatitis C program to include counseling and testing, early detection, surveillance, education, training, and research. Other features of the HCCAP Hepatitis C Awareness 2005 Campaign site include daily tributes to persons who have contributed to the betterment of those with hepatitis C, daily hepatitis C facts, and a calendar of local and regional Hepatitis Awareness Month activities.

“One hundred thousand messages represent just 2.5% of the 4 million Americans living with hepatitis C. If 100,000 people sent messages about hepatitis C to their elected representatives today, it would have a tremendous impact in Washington, D.C. It is time for the community to speak up and be heard. Our leaders need to know that hepatitis C is an issue their constituents are deeply concerned about. Working together, we can make a difference for the millions of people living with this life-threatening disease.” said HCCAP Managing Ambassador Lorren Sandt.

Hepatitis C has been dubbed “the silent epidemic” because many Americans are unaware of this infectious disease despite the fact that HCV is so common. Further, many with the disease are unaware they are infected with HCV because symptoms often do not appear until serious liver damage has already occurred. The primary goal of HCCAP during Hepatitis Awareness Month is to increase awareness of the hepatitis C epidemic. “The earlier people are diagnosed, the more likely that we can prevent serious complications and control the spread of HCV. Hepatitis C must become part of the public consciousness.” said Dr. Tina M. St. John, Medical Director of the Caring Ambassadors Program.

xxx

**For additional information about the HCCAP Hepatitis C Awareness Campaign, chronic hepatitis C, the *Hepatitis C Epidemic Prevention and Control Act*, or the Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program, contact Lorren Sandt at 1-877-737-4372 or [lorren@hepcchallenge.org](mailto:lorren@hepcchallenge.org), or visit us online at [www.hepcchallenge.org](http://www.hepcchallenge.org).**