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“Miracles For MSA” Proclaims March as Multiple System Atrophy Awareness Month

(FACEBOOK, WORLDWIDE – March 3, 2010) – There is no Michael J. Fox. Nor a Muhammad Ali or a Lou Gehrig. But more than 1,000 fans—known on Facebook as Miracles For MSA—have proclaimed March as Multiple System Atrophy Awareness Month.

Passionate patients, caregivers, researchers, friends, and family members want everyone to know about this rare, incurable brain disease that combines many symptoms of Parkinson’s Disease and ALS, with cerebellar ataxia and autonomic failure. Multiple System Atrophy, or MSA, affects multiple systems of the body. It’s a disease that’s hard to diagnose. And it wreaks havoc on not only the patient but all of those who love the patient as well.

“Miracles For MSA,” a Facebook page connecting those affected by MSA worldwide, stemmed from a similarly named charity event last March in Nashville, Tenn. It brought together Pittsburgh Steeler’s Cornerback Fernando Bryant, a promising genomic research initiative, a Michigan life science startup, and Vanderbilt University Medical Center, to raise money for life-saving MSA research. The idea for MSA Awareness was sparked by Bryant’s former basketball coach, Bob Summers, on the Miracles for MSA Facebook page. Summers’ wife suffers from MSA.

“MSA is so rare that many cases are wrongly diagnosed as Parkinson’s or some other similar disease,” said Pam Bower, an active member of the Facebook page, who’s mother-in-law was afflicted with MSA. “My hope with the MSA Awareness month is that the worldwide MSA community will feel more united and will be inspired to do more to raise the profile of this disease and to raise funds.”

Multiple System Atrophy encompasses disorders previously known as Shy-Drager Syndrome, striatonigral degeneration and sporadic olivopontocerebellar atrophy.

Currently, The Shy-Drager Syndrome (SDS/MSA) Support Group, a growing legal entity devoted to fostering an ongoing relationship between patients, caregivers, their family members, and medical professionals, is one of the most sought-after resources for those dealing with the disease. By declaring March Multiple System Atrophy Awareness month, organizers hope to take awareness and fundraising one step further, bringing this and other groups to the forefront of awareness collectively.

According to the National Institutes of Health, “Multiple system atrophy (MSA) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by symptoms of autonomic nervous system failure such as fainting spells and bladder control problems, combined with motor control symptoms such as tremor, rigidity, and loss of muscle coordination. MSA affects both men and women primarily in their 50s. The disease tends to advance rapidly over the course of nine to 10 years, with progressive loss of motor skills, eventual confinement to bed, and death. There is no remission from the disease. There is currently no cure.”

The group is creating a website that will be open to all MSA organizations worldwide, a resource for all MSA connections. The website, www.msaawareness.org, will be live mid- to late-March.

For more details about Multiple System Atrophy please see the National Institutes of Health MSA factsheet at http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/msa/detail_msa.htm or visit the European MSA Study Group website (www.emsa-sg.org).

To join the “Miracles for MSA” Facebook page, visit <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Miracles-for-MSA/138909258573>.

“Miracles for MSA” is a worldwide group of individuals dedicated to spreading awareness about this disease and inspiring hope for a treatment through fundraising, education and research efforts. The group encourages all worldwide organizations with an interest in MSA to join in its efforts to spread the word about MSA and to inspire the miracle of research that will one day lead to a cure.

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