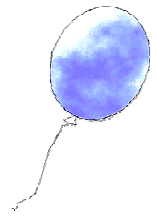


OREGON PROCLAMATION OF HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program Applauds Governor Kulongoski's Proclamation of May 2005 as Hepatitis Awareness Month in Oregon

Oregon City, Oregon – The Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program (HCCAP) salutes Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski for his proclamation of May 2005 as Hepatitis Awareness Month in the state. Hepatitis C is the most common chronic, blood-borne viral 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) including at least 64,000 Oregonians.

HCCAP's observance of Hepatitis Awareness Month will include Hepatitis C Awareness Day in the Galleria at the State Capitol building in Salem on May 23rd from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. Informational booths staffed with representatives from HCCAP, and other organizations and agencies concerned about the hepatitis C crisis will be on hand. Light refreshments will be served and a press conference will be held during the event.

HCCAP Managing Ambassador Lorren Sandt said of the Proclamation and the Hepatitis C Awareness observance, "Oregon is in a difficult situation, as is every state. Hepatitis C is a health care crisis without funding. We need to be creative in addressing the needs of individuals affected. The Governor's Proclamation is a great tool to raise awareness about hepatitis C and the needs of the community throughout Oregon."

Hepatitis C has been dubbed "the silent epidemic" because many Americans are unaware of this infectious disease despite the fact that it 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 public awareness of the hepatitis C epidemic. "The earlier in the course of hepatitis C that people are diagnosed, the more likely it is that we can prevent serious complications and control the spread of the disease. But the first hurdle is to get the word out so that hepatitis C becomes part of the public consciousness," said Dr. Tina M. St. John, Medical Director of the Caring Ambassadors Program. She added, "We are extremely grateful to Governor Kulongoski for his assistance in giving us a platform to increase hepatitis C awareness among Oregonians. With this proclamation, Governor Kulongoski may well end up saving the lives of hundreds of Oregonians with hepatitis C who will be tested and treated for their disease."

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For additional information about Hepatitis Awareness Month in Oregon, chronic hepatitis C, or the Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program, contact Lorren Sandt at 1-877-737-4372 or lorren@hepcchallenge.org, or visit HCCAP online at www.hepcchallenge.org.