Help the American Cancer Society Finish the Fight During Colon Cancer Awareness Month

ATLANTA – February 25, 2013 – Ginny Snyder-Ashman of Pennsylvania was diagnosed with stage IIA colon cancer at the age of 51. She went to the doctor complaining of stomach pains and ended up with a life-changing diagnosis. Now 65 and in good health, Snyder-Ashman wants everyone to know about the importance of being screened for colon cancer starting at age 50.

March is National Colon Cancer Awareness Month. As the American Cancer Society celebrates its 100th birthday this year, it is emphasizing the importance of age-appropriate colorectal cancer screening. An estimated 50,830 deaths from colorectal cancer are expected to occur in 2013, accounting for 9 percent of all cancer deaths.

The Society is also recommending preventative measures individuals can take to reduce their risk of developing the disease. Adults should maintain a healthy weight, get plenty of physical activity, and eat a diet that is high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, and low in red and processed meats. In addition, limiting alcohol intake can also help reduce your risk of this disease. For information about colon cancer screening and nutrition and physical activity recommendations visit www.cancer.org/coloncancer .

Colorectal cancer is highly treatable if found in its early stages, and half of all colon cancer deaths in the United States could be prevented if everyone followed recommended screening guidelines. Most people should start getting screened for colorectal cancer at age 50, but people with a family history are at higher risk and may need to be screened earlier.

“Screening for colorectal cancer has been proven to reduce deaths from the disease both by decreasing the number of people who are diagnosed and by finding a higher proportion of cancers at early, more treatable stages,” says Durado Brooks, M.D., director of prostate and colorectal cancer for the American Cancer Society.

Colon cancer death rates have dropped by more than 30 percent during the past two decades thanks in part to the progress made by the Society. Colon cancer survivors like Ginny Snyder-Ashman are helping to spread the word and save lives. “I’ve told my children, my brothers and anyone who will listen about the importance of taking good care of their health and getting the appropriate screenings,” she says. Her efforts are paying off. Two of her brothers had pre-cancerous polyps removed following their colonoscopies.

The Society is working with community partners to provide education and access to colon cancer screening in communities that are hardest hit by the disease. Society-funded research has led to improved understanding regarding the link between diet and colorectal cancer, and the development of drugs to treat colorectal cancer. In addition, the Society and its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action NetworkSM, are working to ensure that all Americans who need colorectal cancer testing and treatment have access to them. The Society recommends the following tests to find colorectal cancer early:

Tests that detect precancerous polyps and cancer:
• Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years, or
• Colonoscopy every 10 years, or
• Double contrast barium enema (DCBE) every five years, or
• CT colonography (CTC) every five years.

Tests that primarily detect cancer:
• Annual guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT) with high test sensitivity for cancer (Older versions of the Fecal Occult Blood Test should not be used to screen for colorectal cancer), or
• Annual fecal immunochemical test (FIT) with high test sensitivity for cancer (Older versions of the Fecal Occult Blood Test should not be used to screen for colorectal cancer), or
• Stool DNA test (sDNA), with high sensitivity for cancer.

About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers saving lives and

fighting for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. As the largest voluntary health organization, the Society's efforts have contributed to a 20 percent decline in cancer death rates in the U.S. since 1991, and a 50 percent drop in smoking rates. Thanks in part to our progress nearly 14 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. As we mark our 100th birthday in 2013, we're determined to finish the fight against cancer. We're finding cures as the nation’s largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research, ensuring people facing cancer have the help they need and continuing the fight for access to quality health care, lifesaving screenings, clean air, and more. For more information, to get help, or to join the fight, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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