American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Second Life Marks Milestone Year in Virtual World

Signature Fundraising Event to Celebrate “One World…One Hope”

ATLANTA 2009/07/09 -Celebrating its fifth year in the virtual world, the 2009 American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Second Life is set for July 18-19 as avatars representing cancer survivors, caregivers, their families and the millions of passionate supporters gather virtually to celebrate the lives of those who have battled cancer, remember loved ones lost, and join the American Cancer Society in fighting for every birthday, threatened by every cancer in every community.

This year’s virtual world event is expected to attract in excess of 3,000 participants as more than 125 teams unite toward reaching a fundraising goal of $250,000. In 2008, Relay For Life of Second Life raised $215,000 – surpassing its total for the previous three years, combined. Simultaneously, the real-world American Cancer Society Relay For Life is in the midst of its 25th birthday year, as the world’s most successful nonprofit fundraising special event brings together more than 3.5 million people across the United States and 20 other countries to raise funds to embolden the American Cancer Society’s fight for every birthday, threatened by every cancer in every community.

The 2009 Relay For Life of Second Life celebrates “One World…One Hope,” thematic of the Society’s global mission and of the scope of Relay participation in its real and virtual world environments.

Second Life is an online, three-dimensional virtual world imagined and created by its residents, who, within its confines, enjoy almost unlimited freedom in engaging in everyday life much as they would in the real world.

During this year’s registration rally in February, 40 teams pledged their support for the event and signaled the largest, single-day team registration in Relay For Life of Second Life history.

In 2009, for the first time, virtual world Relay participants have engaged in fundraising outside the event’s usual summer timeframe, generating more volunteers, forming more first-time teams and raising additional funds from new communities within the Second Life grid.

Relay For Life of Second Life is emphasizing participation among cancer survivors who are active within the virtual world. Already this year, more than 100 survivors have stepped forward to pledge their support for the American Cancer Society and its impact on their individual battles with cancer.

“The engagement of these committed, virtual world volunteers continues to grow each year and demonstrates the enormous impact they have within the Second Life community and with encouraging others to join the American Cancer Society’s mission to help save lives and create a world with more birthdays,” said Scott P. Bennett, Society national vice president, marketing. “Virtual world Relay participants, just like those in the real world, are passionate about their involvement, and they powerfully reflect Relay’s worldwide reach.”

Relay For Life of Second Life began in 2005, when American Cancer Society volunteers in the Second Life community approached Society staff about creating a Relay For Life event in the virtual world. The result of this collaboration is a cyberspace community gathering in which participants, represented by avatars, continuously navigate a custom-built track, encompassing a 480-acre virtual park, to raise money to fight cancer.

In 2007, the Society created a virtual headquarters in the Second Life community to provide the same, round-the-clock cancer information and services that the organization delivers in the real world. The Second Life headquarters continues to develop opportunities to serve the needs of survivors, caregivers and families.

In 2008, General Electric joined as the first corporate sponsor of the Relay For Life of Second Life, and GE continues its commitment in 2009.

In the real world, Relay For Life is a fun-filled, overnight event that convenes millions of people in support of the American Cancer Society’s lifesaving mission. Relay in the real world traces its roots to 1985, when Dr. Gordy

Klatt, a Tacoma, Washington, colorectal surgeon, circled a track for 24 hours to raise money for the Society.

During real world Relay events, teams of people gather at schools, fairgrounds and parks and take turns walking and/or running laps while aiming to keep at least one team member on the track at all times. Relay For Life events, which are held in more than 5,000 communities, have, since their beginning, combined to raise more than $3 billion to help the Society accelerate the progress against cancer.

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing nearly $3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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