American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Second Life Welcomes “For Life” Events to its Bold, Virtual World Presence

Enhanced Relay to Celebrate “Wishing on a Cure” Theme for 2010

ATLANTA – July 7, 2010 – The sixth annual American Cancer Society Relay For Life® of Second Life is set for July 17-18, 2010, as avatars representing cancer survivors, caregivers, their families and 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 its quest to create a world with less cancer and more birthdays.

This year, Relay For Life of Second Life introduces the “For Life” concept to its community-based, virtual world fundraising engagement. “For Life” events are fundraising fairs and festivals hosted by and for specific interest/niche markets within Second Life. The first of these events – Sail For Life – launched in June and featured sailing regattas, pirate battles, sailing lessons and other waterborne activities for virtual world avatars, and additional such micro-events will complement Relay For Life’s Second Life presence throughout the remainder of the summer.

More than 3,000 participants are expected for Relay For Life’s “Wishing on a Cure”-themed Second Life experience in 2010, as in excess of 135 teams unite toward a fundraising goal of $250,000. Since its first year, Relay For Life of Second Life has raised more than $650,000 for the American Cancer Society and its fight against the disease.

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.

Throughout this year, the Relay For Life of Second Life volunteer committee has worked to increase donation security, invite and train new volunteers, and design the virtual event track which will be used when the main event convenes in mid-July.

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 pledged their support for the American Cancer Society and its impact on their individual battles with cancer. In early June, the Society’s Second Life island hosted an art auction to honor cancer survivors and to commemorate National Cancer Survivors Day (June 6).

“Expanding Relay For Life of Second Life to include a number of signature ‘For Life’ events provides more opportunities for those engaged within the virtual community to be connected to the American Cancer Society and its leadership role in waging the fight against cancer,” said Scott P. Bennett, Society national vice president, marketing. “Our Second Life volunteers’ passion for the American Cancer Society’s mission mirrors that of real world Relay For Life participants and signifies the connection they all have with the Society’s commitment to saving lives by helping people stay well and get well, by finding cures, and by fighting back against a disease which has taken too much.”

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 continuously navigate a custom-built track, encompassing a 480-acre virtual park, in raising money to fight for every birthday, threatened by every cancer in every community.

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.

Linden Lab, which more than a decade ago created the virtually-shared space known as Second Life, enters 2010 as the premier sponsor of the Relay For Life of Second Life.

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 movement. 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 5,100 real world 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; by 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 about $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 anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Jamie Kimbrough
American Cancer Society
Phone: (404) 417-5889
Email: jamie.kimbrough@cancer.org