

Attention News/Assignment Editors:

Prince Edward Kicks Off 4th Annual Ontario Walk Now for Autism

-- Increasing Awareness about Autism and Raising Funds for Research --

TORONTO, June 5 /CNW/ - On Sunday, June 8, 2008, His Royal Highness Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex will join more than 5,000 walkers - including children with autism and their families - at Nathan Phillips Square, to kick off the 4th annual Ontario Walk Now for Autism event. The event aims to increase awareness about autism and to help raise funds for critical scientific research. The day starts at 8:30 a.m. and includes a three kilometer walk up University Avenue, a community resource fair, and child-friendly activities.

Autism affects one in every 150 children. One in 94 boys will be affected. More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than diabetes, cancer, and AIDS combined.

"The passion of the entire autism community - from families, to service providers to researchers - doing whatever they can to find the missing pieces of the autism puzzle is remarkable and we are proud to support them and Autism Speaks Canada in their incredible effort," said Steven Wise, Chairman KRG Children's Charitable Foundation.

Other notable guests include Education Minister Kathleen Wynne, Children and Youth Services Minister Deb Matthews, Dr. Wendy Roberts, Co-director of the Autism Research Unit at The Hospital for Sick Children, and Mark Roithmayr, President of Autism Speaks. Juno-Award winning entertainer, Jack Grunsky and his daughter, Cosima, will be performing.

Event sponsor, KRG Children's Charitable Foundation, has pledged \$2 for every registered walker who raises \$100 or more. Today's Parent Magazine is the national media sponsor. Other sponsors include Mr. Case, Unity Life and Chataway Financial.

"This Walk is so important to this community. It brings families together to build new friendships and much-needed support networks and it fosters a hope that the money we are working hard to raise will one day bring a cure," says Gideon Sheps, a parent of a child with autism.

Autism Speaks Canada is dedicated to increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; funding research into the causes, prevention and treatments and advocates for the needs of individuals with autism. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.

Since 1998 over \$5 million has been granted to the Canadian autism research community by Autism Speaks. In 2007, Toronto was named the first international site of Autism Speaks' Autism Treatment Network - a network of hospitals and physicians aiming to bridge gaps in knowledge and understanding and to improve treatment for individuals with autism.

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