

For Immediate Release -- Events Across the United States Mark Friedrich's Ataxia Awareness Day

Springfield, Virginia- May 14, 2010 - Saturday, May 15, 2010 is Friedrich's Ataxia Awareness Day and will be marked by a number of events across the United States intended to raise awareness and funds to support research leading to treatments and a cure for Friedrich's ataxia. Various members of the U.S. Congress and several state legislatures have recognized the third Saturday in May as Friedrich's Ataxia Awareness Day.

Friedrich's ataxia is a life-shortening neuro-muscular disorder that is usually diagnosed in childhood. It causes muscle weakness and loss of coordination in the arms and legs; impairment of vision, hearing and speech; scoliosis, diabetes; and a life-threatening heart condition. Most patients need a wheelchair full-time within a few years after the onset of symptoms. Life expectancy is reduced to early adulthood. There is currently no effective treatment or cure for Friedrich's ataxia.

Although there is no treatment or cure currently available, Friedrich's ataxia patients and families have more and more reason for real hope and confidence. The extraordinary explosion of research findings that followed the identification of the Friedrich's ataxia gene in 1996 has enabled the Friedrich's ataxia community to break through to "the treatment era." Investigators are now confident that effective treatments and a cure are within their grasp in the near term.

In fact, seven clinical trials on very promising drugs are currently under way in Friedrich's ataxia and at least two more are expected to begin later this year, fueling the determination to conquer Friedrich's ataxia and the growing conviction that treatments can and will be developed for this disease. It is also increasingly clear that the insights resulting from these Friedrich's ataxia treatments will be broadly applicable across a wide range of neurological disorders.

As in the past few years on the third Saturday of May, events will be held on Saturday, May 15, 2010, to increase public awareness of Friedrich's ataxia and to raise funds to support the research that will lead to treatments and a cure for this disease. Please show your concern for all the families affected by this disorder by supporting their efforts on May 15 and by giving to the Friedrich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA). With your support, we will treat and cure Friedrich's ataxia.

Events planned for May 15, 2010:

Ride Ataxia NorCal – Sacramento, May 15-16 – www.curefa.org or www.rideataxia.org/norcal/

Seaside Stride – Seaside Park, NJ, May 15 – www.curefa.org

Outback Steakhouse – Springfield, VA, May 15 - www.curefa.org/pdf/OutbackSpringfield.pdf

Ham Supper & Walk-a-thon – Jonestown, PA – May 15 – www.curefa.org

About FARA

The Friedrich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to accelerating research leading to treatments and a cure for Friedrich's ataxia. Please visit our website at www.curefa.org or call 484-875-3015.

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