



Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation, Inc.

Fighting Bone Marrow Diseases Through Patient Support and Research Since 1983 **800.747.2820**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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5000+ Mile Quest Brings Mother-Daughter Team to Annapolis
Cross-Country Hike Aims To Raise \$1 Million for Bone Marrow Disease

The mother-daughter team from Wisconsin arrives in Annapolis, Maryland on Friday, February 10, 2006 as part of their 5000+ mile, coast-to-coast hike to raise awareness and funds to fight bone marrow disease. Robin Grapa, a 26-year-old aplastic anemia survivor, and her mother, Patty Laatsch, hope to raise \$1 million for the Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation, Inc. (AA&MDSIF), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping patients and their families battle bone marrow diseases.

Robin and her mom will follow the American Discovery Trail, a journey of nearly 5,057 miles across a dozen states. They will be the first mother-daughter team to hike the American Discovery Trail across the country. Their hike begins on February 4th at the Atlantic seashore in Delaware, and will finish at Point Reyes National seashore in October.

“With my new lease on life, I decided I wanted to make a difference—and a big one,” says Robin, who was diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia in 1997 and is now in complete remission. “With more research we can find cures for bone marrow diseases and give patients the hope they need to overcome these debilitating illnesses.”

Aplastic anemia and other bone marrow diseases are non-contagious and occur when the bone marrow stops making enough healthy blood cells. Every 17 minutes someone in America is diagnosed with a bone marrow disease, a life-threatening condition for which, in most cases, the cause is unknown.

“I couldn’t possibly let my baby girl venture across the country by herself, so I decided to join her,” says Patty. “I hope other people will join us, if not physically then at least in spirit, by supporting our hike and helping to improve the lives of everyone suffering from these deadly diseases.”

People can become a “Trail Angel” and help sponsor Robin and Patty’s walk by making tax-deductible contributions online at www.ourhike.com/donate.html, or by check payable to “AA&MDSIF” and sending it to “Our Hike for AA&MDSIF,” PO Box 613, Annapolis, MD. 21404-0613.

Your personal involvement is critical to the success of “Our Hike.” There are many ways to support Robin and her cause as she and Patty cross our nation, including:

- Sponsoring them per mile in order to help them reach their \$1 million goal. Donations may be made online at www.ourhike.com/donate.html, or checks may be sent by mail to “Our Hike for AA&MDSIF”, P.O. Box 613, Annapolis, MD 21404-0613.
- Challenge your friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues, to sponsor Robin and Patty.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper informing their readers about Robin’s hike, asking them to sponsor her cause.

If you live in a community that Robin and Patty may be crossing through, you can also help by:

- Coordinating a fundraising event in your community to help raise dollars. Contact AA&MDSIF at (800) 747-2820 for more information. Fundraising events along the way will not only help boost dollars raised and bring Robin closer to her goal, but will also increase bone marrow disease awareness within your local community.
- Offering your home to these wear travelers! If you live in one of the cities that Robin and Patty will be passing through, please offer your home as their overnight stay, complete with a hot meal and a warm shower! This will save them the cost of a hotel, plus it will give them the added boost they just may need to keep hiking along!
- Encouraging local media outlets to cover “Our Hike”.
- Encouraging your elected officials to meet with Robin and her mother.
- Telling your friends and family members to get involved.

“Most people don’t know much about bone marrow disease until someone in their family is diagnosed,” says Robin. “If just one child and their family become familiar with the disease, the experience will be less scary. If that happens even once, I will know this hike was a success.”

Come meet Robin and Patty at the Sheraton Annapolis Hotel, 137 Jennifer Road, on Friday, February 10th at 5:30pm - live music, live auction of great items, good food and spirits, cash bar and great fun! Tickets are \$15.00 at the door, children 12 and under are \$7.00; RSVP to AA&MDSIF 800-747-2820. Learn more about Robin and Patty’s hike at www.aamds.org or www.ourhike.com. Contact 800-747-2820 to for more details on becoming a part of “Our Hike.”

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Founded in 1983, the Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation, Inc. is dedicated to serving as a resource for patient assistance, advocacy, and support. AA&MDSIF provides patients and their families with educational materials and medical information, and supporting research to find treatments and cures for aplastic anemia (AA), myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria (PNH) and other bone marrow failure diseases.