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**Families Fighting Flu Encourages You to *Stay in the Game*™ This Flu Season –
Get Your Annual Flu Vaccine Today!**

ARLINGTON, Va., October 16, 2013 — Every year in the U.S., children miss more than 38 million days of school due to the flu, a potentially deadly disease that is often underestimated in its severity. In response, Families Fighting Flu, a national non-profit organization dedicated to flu awareness and prevention, today is launching *Stay in the Game*™, a national educational campaign focused on the critical need for annual flu vaccination for the entire family.

Families are so busy with school, extracurricular activities and social events that getting the flu vaccine may not be a top priority. *Stay in the Game* aims to educate about the importance of annual flu vaccination for the entire family through a series of initiatives, including a national television public service announcement (PSA) and educational materials for schools, doctors' offices and other community settings. Additionally, the campaign reminds that nobody should ever be 'too busy' to take preventative measures against this potentially deadly disease.

The flu, or influenza, is unpredictable and is especially concerning for children. Last flu season was devastating with 164 pediatric deaths due to the flu, which is the highest number of pediatric deaths ever recorded in a non-pandemic season. Furthermore, on average, more than 20,000 children are hospitalized each year due to the flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, everyone 6 months of age and older should get vaccinated against the flu every year.

"Annual flu vaccination is the safest and most effective prevention technique we currently have to protect against the flu," said Dr. Andrew Eisenberg, a practicing physician from Sarasota, Fla., and a medical advisor to Families Fighting Flu. "The flu strains can change from year to year, therefore making it important to get vaccinated each and every year to ensure you are protected. It is also a good practice to get your flu vaccine as soon as it is available in your area."

An important component of the *Stay in the Game* campaign is a national broadcast PSA, which shares the unbelievable story of Madison Allen, a 15-year-old flu survivor who was given only a 1 percent chance to live after being diagnosed with the flu. Madison is an active teenager who loves soccer, basketball and hanging out with her friends. However, about three years ago, Madison's life took a turn that neither she nor her family could have ever imagined. She began to feel sick, though went to a friend's birthday party because she did not want to miss out joining her friends as they celebrated the birthday. Soon after she arrived at the party, Madison texted her mom to pick her up because she felt too sick to stay. Over the next two days, Madison's temperature drastically rose; she had a terrible cough and was having difficulty breathing. Her parents rushed her to the emergency room where she was put on oxygen and intubated. As her condition deteriorated, she was quickly moved to the

pediatric intensive care unit, placed on ECMO (life support), dialysis and an oscillator ventilator for a combined five weeks. Madison was diagnosed with the flu and spent a total of 93 days in the hospital. As a result, Madison spent months going through rehabilitation to regain her strength and to relearn how to walk.

While her family typically received their flu vaccinations annually, the year that Madison became seriously ill, they had not been vaccinated.

“Our organization is committed to sharing the stories of our member families in the hopes that we can help raise awareness and educate the public about the seriousness of the flu,” said Laura Scott, executive director of Families Fighting Flu. “Madison’s story underscores the importance for annual flu vaccination. We want everyone to know the flu can be devastating, but it is also preventable.”

Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May, with January and February typically being peak times. So, remember, *Stay in the Game* this flu season – get yourself and your family vaccinated against the flu today!

To watch the PSA and learn more about Madison’s story, visit <http://youtu.be/llxh5vEKill>. To download or order the *Stay in the Game* educational materials, visit www.familiesfightingflu.org/stay-in-the-game.

For more information about the flu and flu prevention, to find an influenza vaccination clinic in your area or to support flu prevention education, visit www.familiesfightingflu.org.

About Families Fighting Flu

Families Fighting Flu is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) volunteer-based advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the lives of children. Our members include families whose children have suffered serious medical complications or died from influenza, as well as health care practitioners and advocates committed to flu prevention. In honor of our children, we work to increase awareness about the seriousness of the disease and to reduce the number of childhood hospitalizations and deaths caused by the flu each year by increasing vaccination rates. Families Fighting Flu offers support to other families and communities who have been severely affected by the flu through resources available on www.familiesfightingflu.org.

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