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Jared Allen to Join Local Children with Type 1 Diabetes in Washington, DC

NFL Star to take part in JDRF Children's Congress

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN -- When children with type 1 diabetes ask members of Congress to "promise to remember me," Congress listens. That's been the experience of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's (JDRF) biennial Children's Congress being held in Washington, D.C from June 22 to June 24. This year JDRF is giving them another reason to listen as it sends Minnesota Viking defensive end, **Jared Allen**, to stand beside the 150 kids from around the country and make their plea for expanded federal funding for diabetes research.

Allen will accompany two siblings, Ryan and Kelly Downes of Inver Grove Heights, who are the delegates for JDRF Minnesota/North Dakota. Kelly, 14, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes one year ago, and her brother Ryan, 12, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was just 22 months old. Their message will be clear – help us find a cure for diabetes and its complications.

"I want to tell Members of Congress how this terrible disease has affected me, my brother, and our whole family," said Kelly, age 14. "When Ryan was diagnosed, we were told there would be a cure in 10 years. It has been 10 years and the cure is not here. And then I got diagnosed. I need to do my part to help make the cure a reality."

"I've been speaking out for diabetes since I can remember," said Ryan. "I am going to Washington to tell my story about living with diabetes. I hope to encourage Congress to give more money to diabetes research so we can find a cure for me, my sister and all people who struggle daily trying to manage the disease."

Jared Allen will be a panelist in a Town Hall forum, "Role Models in Diabetes" on June 23 at the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C. where he will discuss his involvement with JDRF and what it means to raise awareness of type 1 diabetes and funds for

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research. He became involved with JDRF's Walk to Cure Diabetes program, forming his own team, "The Marching Mullets" in Kansas City, and later started his own program called "SACK Diabetes," where he donated money for every sack he made during the 2008 season. Allen raised nearly \$50,000 for JDRF by his performance on the football field.

"I'm so grateful to Jared for being a part of Children's Congress this year," said Jackie Casey, Executive Director of JDRF's Minnesota/North Dakota Chapter. "His support has meant so much to JDRF – raising not only money but awareness about diabetes and just how critical JDRF's work is. I can't think of a better person to move others to action than someone who got involved because he was so moved by one child's, one family's personal story of struggle with diabetes. For Jared, he helps because it is the right thing to do. The kids he meets and JDRF have become his passion."

Children's Congress has been held every other year since 1999; it has become the largest media and grassroots event held in support of finding a cure for type 1 diabetes. A once-in-a-lifetime experience, the newly-selected child delegates will follow in the footsteps of their predecessors in raising national awareness about type 1 diabetes and participating in personal advocacy at the highest level of United States government. And they'll tell their congressional representative's stories like this:

"I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 22 months," said Ryan Downes. "I'm now 12 years old and I'm really getting tired of managing this disease. I just want to be a normal kid, and go to a sleepover and not have to check in all night long."

"I thought I understood what it was like to live with diabetes because my brother has diabetes and my family has been living with the disease for many years," said Kelly Downes. "Then last year, I was diagnosed and I found out that I really didn't understand what it is like. I didn't understand that you never get a break from diabetes. I didn't understand how scary it is to think of the long term complications and how they might impact your life, and that this disease will never go away until there is a cure."

Led by JDRF International Chairman Mary Tyler Moore, JDRF's Children's Congress 2009 will include Congressional visits by the child delegates and a Senate hearing where Ms. Moore, select child delegates, researchers, and business and community leaders will testify on the need for continued funding for research on diabetes and related complications. Ms. Moore and the child delegates, under the theme of "Promise to Remember Me," will ask Members of Congress to support an increase in federal funding for diabetes research.

About Children's Congress

Over 1,500 children from all 50 states between the ages of 4 and 17 applied to take part in Children's Congress 2009. Children were selected by committee based on the need for focus in their Congressional district and in a way that divided the group evenly by ages. Children's Congress has been held every other year since 1999 and has become the largest media and grassroots event held in support of finding a cure for type 1 diabetes. The Senate Co-Chairs of Children's Congress 2009 are Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), and the House Co-Chairs are Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Representative Mike Castle (R-DE).

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About Type 1 Diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that affects children, adolescents, and adults, in which the immune system attacks cells in the pancreas that produce insulin, a hormone that enables people to convert food into energy. People with type 1 diabetes are dependent on insulin for the rest of their life. But insulin is not a cure, and people with diabetes are at significant risk for a wide range of serious complications, including heart disease, blindness and kidney disease. As many as 3 million people in the U.S. have type 1 diabetes.

Diabetes accounts for \$194 billion in annual health care costs in the U.S. alone – making it the single most costly chronic illness.

About JDRF

JDRF is a leader in setting the agenda for diabetes research worldwide, and is the largest charitable funder and advocate of type 1 research. The mission of JDRF is to find a cure for diabetes and its complications through the support of research. Type 1 diabetes is a disease which strikes children and adults suddenly and requires multiple injections of insulin daily or a continuous infusion of insulin through a pump. Insulin, however, is not a cure for diabetes, nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating complications which may include kidney failure, blindness, heart disease, stroke, and amputation.

Since its founding in 1970 by parents of children with type 1 diabetes, JDRF has awarded more than \$1.3 billion to diabetes research, including more than \$156 million in FY2008. In FY2008 the Foundation funded more than 1,000 centers, grants and fellowships in 22 countries.

For more information, visit the JDRF web site at www.jdrf.org or call 800-533-CURE.

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