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September is National Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month

Lydia's Legacy raises awareness of gynecologic cancers through educational efforts.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA (September, 2015) — According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 98,000 women will be diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer in 2015 in the United States, and more than 30,000 women will die from these diseases. In North Carolina alone, it is projected that 2,961 women will be diagnosed in 2015 and 958 (32%) will die, according to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Gynecologic cancers are those which arise in a woman's reproductive system. The 5 main types are cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal and vulvar. Because the symptoms are often vague and dismissed for less serious conditions, many women are not diagnosed until the cancer has reached a more advanced stage when it is more difficult to treat.

Sarah Noonan, Community Programs Manager for Lydia's Legacy and 12 year survivor of ovarian cancer, is now helping to focus local efforts on educating both the general public and medical community about gynecologic cancers, including risk factors, symptoms, treatment and the emotional impact of the diseases. This is accomplished through a variety of programs offered by Lydia's Legacy including Survivors Teaching Students® (a program of the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance) and a variety of initiatives which include educating local women's groups.

Outside of the Pap Smear which screens for cervical cancer, there are no early detection tests for any other type of gynecologic cancer. Many women think they are getting checked for all female cancers at their yearly check-up. In reality, they are not. This is why it is so important for women to know the symptoms, seek appropriate medical care and advocate for treatment by a specialist, a Gynecologic Oncologist, if cancer is suspected. Studies have shown that when treated by a Gynecologic Oncologist, a woman with gynecologic cancer receives more appropriate treatment and as a result, her survival rate is improved.

Noonan was diagnosed at the age of 31 while she and her husband were trying to start a family. Because of a quick response from her doctor, a thorough physical exam, referral for the right tests and to the right specialists, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at an early stage. This is not usually the case, because symptoms are vague and often go undiagnosed for months or even years. "I am



grateful to be here, and my survivorship has quickly changed from being a burden and responsibility to a privilege. My early stage diagnosis means my survival rate is better than 90%. Unfortunately for the many women diagnosed with later stage disease, survival rates are dramatically lower...less than 40%. It is my honor to fight on behalf of many of my friends who I have lost and those who are battling late stage disease every day.”

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Noonan is available to share her personal story with the media and to civic and women's organizations to talk about the detection, treatment and prevention of gynecologic cancers. To reach her, call 980-429-4653 or email sarah.noonan@lydiaslegacy.com. To learn more about gynecologic cancers, contact Lydia's Legacy by visiting our website at www.lydiaslegacy.com

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Lydia's Legacy was founded in 2011 by Carin Ross Johnson in honor of her mother, Lydia Jon Greene, who passed away from complications of uterine sarcoma in 2010. Throughout her battle with cancer, Lydia's chief concern was that there was not enough awareness or visibility about gynecologic cancers in the community. She confided in her daughter that she wanted her life and illness to be used in some way to help others. Creating this organization, increasing awareness and working towards finding a cure was Carin's way of ensuring her mother's legacy lives on. The mission of Lydia's Legacy is to raise awareness of gynecologic cancers through education and fund gynecologic cancer research through donations.

Since 2011, Lydia's Legacy has funded more than \$60,000 in research and has educated hundreds of women and men in the Charlotte and Miami, FL communities about gynecologic cancers.