



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maryland Non-Profits Recognize Skin Cancer Awareness Month

May is Melanoma / Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month

Westminster & Baltimore, MD – Maryland’s lead melanoma and skin cancer prevention non-profits – the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation (JMNMF) and the Center for a Healthy Maryland’s (CHM) Skin Cancer Prevention Program – promote statewide recognition of May 2010 as Melanoma / Skin Cancer Detection & Prevention Month. Both organizations seek to raise awareness about the increasing incidence of skin cancer and melanoma, the most lethal form of the disease; to encourage Maryland citizens to practice sun safe behaviors; and to conduct a monthly skin self-exam or have a medical professional examine the skin for suspicious moles and lesions that could be cancerous. Prevention and early detection are essential to eliminate the risk of developing skin cancer and the deadly consequences of late stage diagnosis.

Skin cancer is the number one cancer in the U.S.; the National Cancer Institute estimated over 1,000,000 new cases in 2009. Further, the NCI projected nearly 69,000 new cases of melanoma were to develop in 2009, resulting in over 8,600 deaths, or approximately one melanoma death every hour. Equally alarming, melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young women 25-29 years old and the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults 15-29 years old.

The Friday before Memorial Day (May 28th) has been declared “Don't Fry Day” to encourage sun safety awareness. The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention and Maryland partners – JMNMF & CHM - launch the second annual National Sun Safety Day, “Don't Fry Day,” to cap the month-long May awareness activities and increase educational efforts before many families enjoy the Memorial Day weekend and begin the season of summer outdoor activities. The key message of Don't Fry Day is to “protect your skin today and everyday.”

Remember to Slip, Slop, Slap®...and Wrap and plan activities away from the midday sun:

- Slip on a shirt;
- Slop on sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher);
- Slap on a hat; and
- Wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and sensitive skin around them from ultraviolet light.

“While most people consider summer months starting in June,” stated JMNMF President Greg Safko, “the sun’s UV rays are equally as strong and damaging in May, as they are in August. The Foundation is very pleased to join with the Center for a Healthy Maryland in promoting UV-safe practices, both indoors and outdoors, throughout the month of May and ending on national “Don't Fry Day! We also strongly encourage citizens to visit our websites for further information on melanoma and skin cancer prevention and detection.”

“A tan is a sign of damaged skin,” stated Roberta Herbst, Program Manager for the Center for a Healthy Maryland. “Tans and sunburns acquired during childhood and throughout a lifetime are the primary cause of skin cancer. The Center encourages people of all ages to protect their skin from the damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation and to seek shade when the sun’s rays are the strongest.”

The month of May caps a notable past year, in which numerous public-health and regulatory “ultra-violet (UV)-safe” initiatives were championed by the two organizations with broad national and local impact. Most notably, the JMNMF and CHM strongly supported safeguards for youth through key testimony at numerous local, state and federal hearings. Successful regulatory passage resulted in Howard County, MD making national precedence as the first jurisdiction in the U.S. to prohibit minors from using tanning devices. Similarly, Baltimore County enacted new statutes requiring both visible warning signage in tanning businesses and stronger warning language regarding the link between ultraviolet light from tanning beds and skin cancer in state-required parental consent forms for minors.

On the state level, however, cross-filed legislation seeking a statewide ban for minors’ access to indoor tanning was defeated despite compelling testimony by both organizations on key scientific evidence, most notably that indoor tanning before the age of 35 has been associated with a 75 percent increase in the risk of melanoma. Joining the Foundation and the Center in support of this legislative initiative, were the American Academy of Dermatology Association, the American Cancer Society and numerous health professionals and agencies from throughout the state.

The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation’s focuses efforts toward: medical research leading to a cure for melanoma; opportunities to educate the general public on prevention and the seriousness of melanoma; and, the development of resources for patients and the entire melanoma community. The Foundation is very instrumental as “the voice for melanoma prevention, detection, care and cure.”

The Center for a Healthy Maryland is an affiliate of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society. The Center’s mission is to advance the practice of medicine, enhance the quality of medical care, and promote the health of the citizens of the State of Maryland. The Center’s programs are directed at the public to improve health status, and also focus on quality improvement and education, with programs for physicians to help them to better serve their patients.

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