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MEDIA RELEASE

Cancelling 'Not an Option' for Kidney March 2020

(Calgary, Alberta) Kidney March is going ahead in an exciting new format for 2020, keeping in theme with their annual motto "Failure is Not an Option." This will be the 11th year for the three-day, 100-kilometre event held every September in the Calgary area and foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Kidney March organizers knew this year was going to look very different. Marchers will still walk 100 kilometres and raise the minimum \$2,200 in the battle against kidney disease and for organ donation but will unite virtually from across Canada. The 500+ participants in this year's march will complete Kidney March in their own communities. They will start by walking 70 kilometres between August 10 and September 10. Then they will connect virtually over the final three days of Kidney March, September 11 – 13, to walk 10 kilometres per day and complete the remaining 30 kilometres of their 100-kilometre journey.

"For the safety of our participants, we knew big changes would be necessary. Many of our participants are high-risk or family members of those most vulnerable. We also knew we could not let our community down by postponing or cancelling our event. For most participants, it is a year-long commitment to training and fundraising. It is more than a walk, Kidney March means so much to so many, it's a community of support."
Said Laura Fleming, Manager of Kidney March and Signature Events, The Kidney Foundation of Canada (Southern Alberta Branch). "We are thrilled by the number of people who continue to register every day. The support from across Canada is truly phenomenal." Fleming added.

Marchers are drawn together because their lives have been impacted by kidney disease. Those living with kidney disease, friends, family and healthcare heroes rally together for this cause. Some also join who are not connected to kidney disease but simply want to do something meaningful, make a difference and challenge themselves. **1 in 10 Canadians has kidney disease or is at risk, and the scariest part is most don't know it. A person can lose up to 80% kidney function without symptoms. Every day 15 people learn their kidneys have failed, and they will need either dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive. There is no cure for kidney disease, both dialysis and transplants are a form of life support. 78% of Canadians waiting for an organ transplant are waiting for a Kidney. Wait times average 4 years, and many have died waiting; that is why organ donation is such a vital part of The Kidney Foundation's work.** Kidney disease is not only devastating physically and emotionally; it also comes with a huge financial burden. Before the pandemic, requests for assistance were already greater than the funds available. The Kidney Foundation knows the need will only increase over the coming months.

"With growing economic, psychological, and health-related stresses impacting our kidney community, we need to continue Kidney March. People are counting on us. The funds raised will improve lives, there's no question about that," said Joyce Van Deurzen, Executive Director, The Kidney Foundation of Canada (Southern Alberta Branch).

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Every year Kidney March makes a huge impact. Last year the march raised over 1.4 million dollars for The Kidney Foundation of Canada. **The money raised supports kidney disease prevention, lifesaving research, patient support programs, health education, and organ donation initiatives.** A significant portion of the funds raised goes towards Canadian research projects, which are vital to the development of improved treatments and a cure.

The true impact of Kidney March, however, is beyond the numbers, it's made up of every participant's powerful story and the incredible impact they have on the lives of Canadians living with Kidney disease.

Learn more and be inspired to register or donate at KidneyMarch.ca

On Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @KidneyMarch

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Media are invited to report on the new digital format for Kidney March 2020 as well as interviews are available from all of the following participants who have inspirational stories. Interviews are also available with organizers of the event. See a brief description of their stories below:

*(Please contact **Erin Birbeck** to arrange interviews, see contact info at the bottom of each page)*

- **Sylvia Shields** (Calgary, AB) Former employee of the Calgary Herald Sylvia Shields, an 87-year-old kidney patient, just registered for Kidney March 2020 on May 31st. This year's new virtual format will allow her to participate, and she is taking full advantage of it. She will be walking her 100 KM down the halls of her condo building the Aviemore in Calgary, with the help and encouragement of the other condo residents. Specifically, she will be cheered on by her core group of supporters and fellow Kidney Foundation volunteers known as the *Aviemore Angels*. She plans to walk about 2.6 kilometres per day, ***"Each floor is about 1.3 kilometres, so if I circle it twice, that will give me the distance I need per day. If it is nice out, and my health allows it, I will walk outside too."*** Due to her health conditions, there was no way for her to participate in the outdoor, 3-day, 100 KM event in the past. ***"This is a wonderful opportunity for me to make a difference,"*** Sylvia said with excitement in anticipation of the challenge she is about to take on. Sylvia lost one of her kidneys early in her twenties due to toxemia during the birth of her first child and didn't even know it until years later during the birth of her second child. With only 11% kidney function remaining, she is now facing kidney failure and suffers from neuropathy, but Sylvia tells us that will not stop her from participating in Kidney March. ***"With the support of the Kidney Foundation, I have discovered unlimited resources that have allowed me to maintain a healthier lifestyle. Although we are living***

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through unprecedented times, I am determined to do my part to give back to a foundation that has helped me and millions of Canadians.”

- **Kim Ball** (Calgary, AB) Kim Ball, a urologist nurse and mother of three young kids, will be a first-time marcher this year and is doing it for her youngest son Liam. Liam, an adorable little boy with bright eyes and a charming smile, was born in 2018 with very low kidney function. Now at just over a year old, Liam has undergone two surgeries, is on growth hormones and has started peritoneal dialysis. ***“As a Mother, I would move heaven and earth for my kids, but for today I will march with other fighters in support of Liam's fight to overcome kidney disease.”*** – Kim. Learn more about Kim and Liam in this video: <https://facebook.com/kidneymarch/videos/539097346993236/> Also see Photo Attached
- **Kashton Ferguson (12 yr old participant) and his father Trevor Ferguson (Kidney Patient and transplant recipient)** (Calgary, AB) With the past the minimum age for participants of Kidney March being 16, young Kashton was always on the sidelines. This year's new format, however, has allowed family members of all ages to march or crew. Kashton is the son of two participants who have been heavily involved in Kidney March since 2015. Since he was six years old, Kashton has been outside looking in on the event his family loves, and he is thrilled about being on the inside this year. ***“He is so excited he can't contain it,” says Trevor Ferguson, Kashton's father. “Kashton has always wanted to be a part of Kidney March, and especially now that he too has been diagnosed with PKD like myself, he is even more driven to do the most he can to help fund research and spread awareness for kidney disease. Kashton is anything but shy and never holds back from speaking. We love seeing how passionate he is about this cause and are ready to walk the full 100 kilometres together as a family.”*** Trevor was diagnosed with PKD out of the blue in 2003. As his kidney function progressively declined, he received a life-saving Kidney transplant in 2015. Now his energy is up, and he has been doing well since. When asked why he is doing Kidney March he says, ***“he had time to reflect a lot on life while in the hospital and now with his new kidney he plans for the future but lives for today as you never know what tomorrow will bring.”*** Kidney March allows him an opportunity to give back, and with his new lease on life, he wants to help and encourage others who are going through what he has.
- **Dr. Nairne Scott-Douglas, Senior Medical Director of the Kidney Health SCN** (Calgary AB) He is larger than life – in what he has achieved for kidney health, the care of kidney patients in Alberta, and as a devoted volunteer for the kidney cause. Through his thoughtful leadership, kidney research has blossomed in Alberta with dynamic collaborations between Edmonton, Calgary, and across disciplines from nephrology

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to cardiology and back. Nairne has always kept kidney patients and their needs first. One of the things most admired about Nairne is his huge heart. He has made the kidney cause his life's work far beyond his professional role, contributing countless hours as a volunteer in the kidney community. Nairne has been Medical Crew Lead for Kidney March since its inception 11 years ago. The Medical Crew has been a critical support for this event because many participants are kidney patients and transplant recipients. Some Marchers even walk 33 kilometres a day, undertake dialysis overnight, and return to walk again – three days in a row. The value of having one of the top kidney specialists interact on a personal level with patients at an event like this is immeasurable.

- **Michelle MacKinnon & family** (Ontario) Michelle's son David was diagnosed with Renal Failure at the age of 17. "We didn't even know what Nephrology meant but assumed it had something to do with kidneys. The doctor explained that David would need emergency dialysis, and with that David broke down. I sat there and watched my beautiful son's spirit completely shatter before my eyes, and I had never in my life felt more helpless." Michelle was approved as David's donor, and the transplant date was set but postponed three times due to more testing and medical conflicts – rescheduled finally five months later, she pleaded with them not to postpone. Still, she but was not successful. The wait was too long for David, and on June 8th, at the age of 18, David passed away from Hypertensive Encephalopathy at the very hour they should have been waking up from their surgeries. Michelle honours David in many ways, one of which is she donated the kidney meant to save David to another mother's child, a two-year-old boy she had never met. He will turn six this April and he is thriving. Learn more about Michelle and David's story in this video: <https://facebook.com/kidneymarch/videos/635212403929850/>
- **Joyce Van Deurzen & Laura Fleming** (Calgary Alberta) Joyce is the Executive Director of The Kidney Foundation of Canada Southern Alberta Branch. Laura Fleming is the Manager of Kidney March and Signature Events at The Kidney Foundation Southern Alberta Branch. Both are available for interviews regarding the event as well as any details regarding The Kidney Foundation's mission.

The Foundation's national research program has grown to become one of the most significant sources of funding for scientists conducting kidney-related research. This support has contributed to making Calgary one of the top centres for clinical kidney research in Canada. We are also committed to providing education, information and support about kidneys, kidney disease and organ donation.

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