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MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Kidney March is back for an unforgettable journey**

**September 9 – 11, 2022 • 3 days – 100 kilometres – K-Country to Calgary**

[Calgary] **The Kidney Foundation of Canada is celebrating a huge milestone:** the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kidney March and their return to an in-person event after two virtual years. Kidney March, presented by Otsuka Canada Pharmaceutical Inc. takes place September 9 - 11, 2022. Participants are walking 100 kilometres over three days across a challenging route through the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. This breathtaking adventure begins at the Millarville Racetrack, passes through Kananaskis, Turner Valley, Black Diamond, Bragg Creek, and ends at Winsport Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, Alberta.

Hundreds of Marchers and Crew are drawn together because their lives have been impacted by kidney disease. Patients, loved ones, doctors, nurses, and researchers all participate side by side, connecting the community and building bonds that go far beyond the event itself. **Kidney March is the only charity event of its kind for this cause in the world.** Participants travel to march from across Canada and beyond, plus some will participate virtually in their communities. Participants have come from as far as New Zealand, England, Austria, USA, Morocco, and more.

Kidney disease is a leading cause of death in Canada. It's called the silent killer for a reason. By the time you know you have it, it's often too late. **Four million Canadians** have chronic kidney disease or are at risk and there is **no cure. 77% of Canadians waiting for an organ transplant are waiting for a Kidney.** With an average wait time of over four years, for some, the wait will be too long. Both dialysis and transplants are a form of life support, this is why funding research is vital to the development of improved treatments and a cure.

"Kidney March is a bold commitment. It asks participants to do the most they possibly can for kidney disease and organ donation. Our community's unwavering support for the cause, and each other, is inspiring, and the funds we are raising will and have improved lives. There's no question about that," said Joyce Van Deurzen, Executive Director, The Kidney Foundation of Canada (Southern Alberta Branch).

Every year Kidney March makes a huge impact. Over the last 12 years the March raised over 11 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 it has on the lives of Canadians living with kidney disease.

Visit [kidneymarch.ca](http://kidneymarch.ca) to donate to the event or learn more about how you can take part.

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## Media are invited to report on:

- **Local Participant stories** about why they will be Marching this year and for who. Interviews of participants and organizers can be scheduled anytime prior to the event. See the list below of some of the interviewees available and a brief description of their touching human-interest stories.
- **The Kidney March Opening Ceremony on Friday, September 9th at 7:00 am.** At Millarville Racetrack, 306097 192 Street, Millarville, AB T0L 1K0. Interviewees will be available on site.
- **Live reporting of Kidney March in Calgary along the route on Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup>, between 8:00 am – 1:00 pm.** *Map of route can be provided with approximate times and best locations.*

**\*\* We would also like to let Calgarians know in advance, to watch for participants on the pathways and roadways over the weekend in and around Calgary. The Calgary Tower will also be light up red for Kidney March Sunday night. \*\***

- **The Kidney March Closing Ceremony Sunday September 11, 2:30 – 4:30 pm. At Winsport Canada Olympic Park's Festival Tent, Canada Olympic Rd SW, Calgary, AB.** There will be a parade made up of all participants descending the COP hill road at approximately 2:50 pm lead by an RCMP and CPS officer with Flags. The Ceremony will start at approximately 3:15 pm in the Festival Tent.  
*Speakers will include but are not limited to: Joyce Van Deurzen, Executive Director, The Kidney Foundation Southern Alberta branch and Dr. Daniel Muruve, Professor, Department of Medicine, University of Calgary Canada Research Chair in Inflammation, Personalized Medicine and Kidney Disease.*

Visit [kidneymarch.ca](http://kidneymarch.ca) to be inspired.

On Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @KidneyMarch

*\*Photos and video of past events for B-roll are available by request for use by media.*

## Available Interviewees & Background info:

***(All the below participants will be in Calgary for the event).***

**Joyce Van Deurzen – Executive Director at The Kidney Foundation of Canada, Southern Alberta Branch, and Saskatchewan Branch.** Joyce can speak about Kidney March as an event founder and organizer. She can also speak about the status of kidney disease and organ donation in Alberta and discuss the direct impact and work being done by The Kidney Foundation of Canada as a result of the funds raised by Kidney March. “Kidney March is all about people coming together to make a difference in the lives of others and to create a different future.”

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**Dr. Daniel Muruve, Calgary, AB. (Professor, Department of Medicine, kidney specialist, and Canada Research Chair in Personalized Medicine, Inflammation and Kidney Disease).** Daniel has been funded directly by The Kidney Foundation for research in the past and he is also a multi-year participant of Kidney March and the MC at both ceremonies this year. Dan is a big supporter of the event, and it's benefits to the community. He is dedicated to raising awareness not only about kidney disease but regarding Calgary as a world center of excellence for Kidney Research.

**Nancy Southin, Kamloops, BC. (Surprise diagnosis of kidney disease, and transplant recipient)** Nancy, like so many others, had kidney disease but didn't know it until it was too late. Nancy was diagnosed with IgA Nephropathy (an autoimmune disease) after routine bloodwork ordered by a new doctor. Six years later she was feeling quite ill and learned her kidneys had reached the point of failure and she had to start dialysis. Luckily Nancy quickly found a living donor in a friend from her curling team. Next year it will be 20 years since she received her gift of life. A milestone of its own. She is excited to be doing Kidney March for the first time this year and will be traveling to Alberta to participate and give back to the community that has helped her so much. *"Without the care of so many kidney professionals, my family, and friends, and of course my donor, my life would not be as rich as it is now. I've been remiss in engaging in with the kidney community and am so happy to commit to doing the Kidney March to give back to the community that helped me so much and helped me to continue my life. Things could have gone the other way and although I don't like to think about it, I could be...not alive".*

**Siarra Weisensel, Calgary, AB. (Family with PKD, her mother has PKD and kidney a transplant)** Siarra, is a three-time marcher and Captain of her team the Kidneyweisers. Her family has been directly impacted by a genetic kidney disease, known as Polycystic Kidney Disease or (PKD). Her mom needed a kidney donation recently and thankfully received a that gift of life donation from an anonymous donor. They family walks in honour of her mom's kidney journey. "As our family grows our team grows, and we get share our story and learn the stories of others and become closer on another level." This will be their first year participating in-person all together for the first time. "This is going to be such an amazing experience for all of us and something we will not likely forget."

**Cassandra Graham, Coquitlam, BC. (Mother of child with rare genetic kidney disease)** The mother of three boys whose youngest son Theo was diagnosed with Dent's by surprise in 2021 disease (*Dent Disease is a rare genetic kidney disease with only 250 registered cases nationally*). Cassandra shares how this diagnosis has affected the entire the family and how they are facing the daily challenges as a united front. Not only is Cassandra and her family committed to supporting Theo through this challenging time but also to the cause of raising awareness about kidney disease and the importance of organ donation. Cassandra is a member of Team BeCause YuKan, the current top fundraising team. See her story here: <https://youtu.be/G-ALUzsm43w>

**Michelle MacKinnon, Niagara Falls, ON. (Mother of a son who passed from kidney disease and is a living organ donor)** 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

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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 5 months later, she pleaded with them not to postpone but was not successful, The wait was too long for David and on June 8th, At the age of 18, David passed away of 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. Another way she honors David is by participating in Kidney March, traveling all the way from Ontario.

**Evelyn Serbout, Calgary, AB. (Sister passed from Kidney Disease)** Evelyn is the captain of Team “Marchers without Borders” with team members across Canada and one participating in Morocco. For the 4th consecutive year Evelyn will take part in Kidney March, to honour a lost loved one and help those still fighting for their lives against kidney disease. When she joined the event in 2019, it was to help raise awareness and find a kidney donor for her sister, Zenny, who at that time was in her second year of dialysis. In April of 2021, heaven gained another angel in her sister. “I thought it will be too hard and emotional for me to continue my quest now that the very person as to why I am walking the 100km is gone. But I was wrong! Instead, I became even more inspired and motivated to continue. My walk was hard but when I think of those people who are still fighting against this disease are still out there bravely facing their battle with their head up high. I can't stop. I have to continue but now, I am not only doing this for in my sister's honor, but I am doing it for all those lives impacted by this deadly disease.”

**Grace Jodoin, Cold Lake, AB. (Living Organ donor)** In a random moment of fate, Grace saw Christopher Wasylkiewicz’s appeal for a kidney come up on her Facebook page. Grace was living in Cold Lake and Chris was in Calgary, and they had no mutual connections, but somehow Chris’s appeal showed up on Grace’s Facebook newsfeed. With zero connections to kidney disease, just wanting to give back, Grace began her testing in 2018, and after a year, it was determined that she was a match to be Chris’s living organ donor. On December 18, 2019, Grace donated her kidney to Chris in Calgary. Today, she continues to celebrate their life-saving relationship by participating in her first in-person Kidney March this year.

**Fred Robins, Medicine Hat, AB. (75+ year old participant)** Fred is in his mid 70’s and will be participating for his 4<sup>th</sup> time this year. Three words best describe Kidney March participant Fred. Brave, Tenacious and Inspiring. Fred participates for all those who can’t. His daughter, a hemodialysis dialysis nurse who walked in 2012 inspired him to take part himself. “There’s a joy that Kidney March brings knowing that I, as an individual, can make a difference. I think I have been looking for years to find something like that and I can do this. It’s a wonderful, marvellous experience.” **See his story here**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn9UehOXJxg>

*\* We have participants across the country, so if you are looking for someone specific to your location, I could likely accommodate your request\**

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## **Kidney March 2022, Event Background:** Event dates: Sept 9, 10, 11, 2022.

- Marchers walk over 100 km, over 3-days, from Kananaskis to Calgary and raise a minimum of \$2,200 each in the fight against kidney disease and for organ donation.
- In support of The Kidney Foundation of Canada, Kidney March has raised over \$11 million to change the lives of kidney patients and their families since it began in 2010.
- Around 400+ participants will take. They are coming from across Canada and beyond. Participants have come from as far as New Zealand, England, Austria, USA, Morocco, and more.
- 2022 marks the return of an in-person Kidney March for the first time in two years. The event will include an Opening Ceremony where marchers embark on their 100KM journey from Millarville and make their way into Kananaskis Country.
- Marchers walk an average of 33 KM per day. *That's almost three consecutive marathons.* They spend two nights in Kidney March camp, located outside of Bragg Creek in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.
- The 3-day journey ends back in Calgary, where the Closing Ceremony takes place at Canada Olympic Park. Media, family, friends, sponsors and supporters are invited to attend this celebration of everyone's achievement.

## **Background on The Kidney Foundation:**

- The Kidney Foundation provides support services for people with kidney disease and their families, such as short-term financial assistance, peer support and education resources.
- It is also a leading source of research funding in the field of kidney disease and transplantation.

## **Kidney disease and organ donation facts:**

- 1 in 10 Canadians have kidney disease and numbers are on the rise.
- Of the 4 million Canadians with kidney disease, more than 52,000 are being treated for kidney failure symptoms.
- There is no cure for kidney disease and kidney damage is irreversible.
- 46% of new kidney patients are under the age of 65.
- 77% of Canadians waiting for an organ transplant are waiting for a kidney.
- Kidney Disease was the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Canada in 2019.
- Symptoms may not develop until permanent damage has occurred.
- Out of pocket costs for kidney disease treatment can be 12.5% of a patient's income.

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