



POST-POLIO HEALTH INTERNATIONAL
INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL VENTILATOR USERS NETWORK

Post-Polio Health International Launches **WE'RE STILL HERE!** Campaign to Focus Attention on Polio Survivors Worldwide

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 27, 2007 – Post-Polio Health International (PHI), headquartered here, has launched an international campaign to focus attention on the estimated 20 million survivors of polio worldwide including up to 1 million in the United States. Called **WE'RE STILL HERE!**, the campaign's goal is to reach newspapers and other media outlets across the country and throughout the world with letters to the editor and stories about polio survivors.

“More than 50 years have passed since the poliovirus vaccine was developed in the United States,” said Joan L. Headley, executive director of PHI and a polio survivor. “What we hear so often is ‘Nobody gets polio anymore,’ or ‘Polio has been eradicated.’ And while that is generally true for the United States, there are still outbreaks in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria, and it is estimated that as many as 60,000 polio survivors worldwide are under the age of six.



“The polio epidemics of the 20th century may be history, but the reality is that millions of people are living with the consequences of having had polio,” said Headley. “Even more critical is that as new cases of polio are discovered around the world, we need to remain vigilant not only to

eliminate this disease but also to continually find new treatments to minimize its long-term effects.”

Headley said that most U.S. polio survivors contracted the disease in the 1940s and early 1950s before Jonas Salk developed the vaccine in 1955. “And we’re still here,” she said. “We’re working, volunteering, raising families and, as we age, may be experiencing new symptoms related to our previous polio diagnosis.”

Known as post-polio syndrome, these symptoms include unaccustomed fatigue, new muscle weakness, joint or muscle pain, difficulty sleeping, breathing and swallowing and more severe than normal conditions associated with aging.

“We’re still here, and more than ever, we need access to healthcare professionals who recognize the uniqueness of our conditions and how to treat them,” said PHI President Lawrence C. Becker himself a polio survivor. He adds that the millions of polio survivors worldwide are among the pioneers in living long, fruitful lives, *in the mainstream of society*, with major physical disabilities. He says, “We think that in today’s rapidly changing healthcare environment, there are important lessons to be learned from polio – not only from the epidemics and the vaccines, but from the evolution of our strategies for living well, and aging well.”

During the week of October 14–20, PHI members and a worldwide network of polio support groups associated with PHI will participate in media interviews, book signings and lectures. The European Polio Union has scheduled a rally on October 16 in the center of Brussels to call attention to polio survivors and will petition members of the European Parliament for their support.

Post-Polio Health International is a nonprofit organization based in St. Louis. Founded in 1958, the organization has grown from a small newsletter into an international resource for health professionals and both polio survivors and users of home mechanical ventilation. PHI’s mission is to enhance the lives and independence of polio survivors and home ventilator users through education, advocacy, research and networking. The organization held its first international conference in 1981 after numerous polio survivors began reporting the late effects

of their condition. Today, PHI serves as a resource for 160 support groups in the United States and 50 international groups and makes grants to fund research on the consequences of polio.

For more information about the **WE'RE STILL HERE!** campaign, contact Post-Polio Health International, Inc. at 314-534-0475 or visit the website at **www.post-polio.org**. PHI can also facilitate media interviews with members of PHI's board or staff or with polio survivors.