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FAMILIES UNITE TO PROMOTE ANNUAL PEDIATRIC FLU IMMUNIZATION

- *Families Fighting Flu* Alliance Seeks To Educate Nation on Childhood Influenza Risk -

WASHINGTON, DC, October 12, 2005 – Today, families and pediatricians from across the United States are launching *Families Fighting Flu, Inc.*, a first-of-its-kind alliance whose aim is to reduce pediatric deaths due to influenza by promoting annual influenza (“flu”) immunization for children. Family members involved in *Families Fighting Flu* have either lost a child to the flu or have had a child who experienced severe medical complications from the flu. The non-profit organization is urging the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recommend annual influenza vaccination for all children to ensure that parents get their children vaccinated against the flu every year.

Families Fighting Flu aims to provide support to all families affected by pediatric flu-related deaths and the countless other families who have had their lives altered by influenza in previous years. The alliance encourages all families and individuals who have lost a child to the flu or whose young loved ones have suffered from influenza to unite for support and prevention. In addition, the alliance is working with pediatricians to help parents recognize the warning signs of flu and to prevent its spread.

“Our focus is on immunizing children because they have not developed the immunity to the flu virus that adults have and are therefore two to three times more likely than adults to develop influenza,” said Richard Kanowitz, president of *Families Fighting Flu*, whose four-year-old daughter Amanda died suddenly in March 2004, from [complications related to] influenza. “In addition, children help spread the virus to their families and others in the community,” Kanowitz said.

“*Families Fighting Flu* urges every parent or caregiver to make an appointment for their children to get a flu vaccination this fall,” said Joe Lastinger, treasurer and secretary, whose three-year-old daughter Emily died suddenly from influenza in 2004. “Preventing influenza is one of the best things you can do for your child and your whole family,” said Lastinger.

About *Families Fighting Flu, Inc.*

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. is a group of families and pediatricians, incorporated as a non-profit in 2005, who have lost a child to the flu or whose child experienced severe medical complications from the influenza virus. Each year, children die from the flu and the *Families Fighting Flu* members are dedicated to providing comfort to one another as well as to educating others about the importance of vaccinating children against flu every year. The goal of *Families Fighting Flu* is to educate families and pediatricians about the importance of annual flu immunization for children. The organization is urging the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) – the group of experts who provide advice and guidance to the CDC on the most effective means to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases – to recommend annual influenza vaccination for all children, to ensure that parents get their children vaccinated against the flu every year. For more information about *Families Fighting Flu*, go to www.familiesfightingflu.org.

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