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**FAMILIES FIGHTING FLU BOARD MEMBER SPEAKS AT 42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL  
NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION CONFERENCE**

***-- Joe Lastinger Stresses Importance of Why All Children  
Need to be Vaccinated Against the Flu --***

**ATLANTA, Ga., March 20, 2008** — Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF) Board Member Joe Lastinger spoke today at the Closing Plenary Session of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Immunization Conference in Atlanta, GA about his daughter's fatal experience with influenza and stressed the seriousness of influenza and the importance of vaccinating all children against the disease. This was the first time a FFF member has spoken at this conference.

Since facing the personal tragedy of losing their 3½-year-old daughter, Emily, to the flu in 2004, Joe and his wife, Jennifer, along with the other member families of FFF, have dedicated themselves to educating people about influenza in kids in the hope that other parents will not have to experience the same heartbreak of losing a child to a vaccine preventable illness.

“My wife and I lost our beautiful, healthy daughter to the flu,” said Joe Lastinger. “Emily did not have to die. Had she been vaccinated against the flu she may still be with us today. It’s a tragedy that no parent should ever have to experience, especially when it can potentially be avoided with a simple annual flu vaccination,” continued Lastinger.

At the time of Emily’s death, the CDC did not recommend vaccinating children against the flu under the age of 23 months. However, in February 2008, FFF and the entire influenza community accomplished a monumental achievement when the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) expanded its influenza vaccination recommendations to include all children ages six months to 18 years. Previous recommendations included all children aged six months to 59 months. This new recommendation will be implemented as soon as feasible, but no later than the 2009-2010 influenza season.

**Flu in Children**

Children are two-to-three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu because of their less developed immune systems. In fact, more than 20,000 children under the age of five are hospitalized due to influenza every year. In addition, over the past four flu seasons more than 300 children have died from influenza in the U.S. The flu vaccine is typically 60 to 90 percent

effective when administered to children and is a simple way to help stop the spread of the flu virus to children and others in the community.

### **About the National Immunization Conference**

Hosted by the CDC, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), the National Immunization Conference explores the latest developments in vaccine science, policy, education, and technology. The conference brings together a wide variety of local, state, federal, and private-sector immunization partners to explore science, policy, education, and planning issues related to immunization in general and vaccine-preventable disease. The goals of this year's Annual Conference are to provide information that will help participants provide comprehensive immunization coverage for all age groups and explore innovative strategies for developing programs, policy, and research to promote immunization coverage for all age groups.

### **About Families Fighting Flu, Inc.**

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization established in 2004, that is made up of families and healthcare practitioners who have experienced first-hand the death of a child due to the flu, or have had a child experience severe medical complications from the flu. FFF is dedicated to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of vaccinating children against the flu every year. Through education and advocacy, we hope to improve the rates of annual childhood influenza vaccinations and help reduce the number of childhood illnesses and deaths caused by the flu each year. For more information about Families Fighting Flu, go to [www.familiesfightingflu.org](http://www.familiesfightingflu.org).

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. is made possible by unrestricted grants from MedImmune, Inc., sanofi pasteur, Novartis Vaccines, CSL Biotherapies, and The Clorox Company.

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