

Contact: Melissa Chefec, MCPR Public Relations, 203-968-6625

For Immediate Release:

NATIVE RHODE ISLANDER TURNED LYME DISEASE ADVOCATE
Debbie Siciliano and Time for Lyme endow Lyme research center at Columbia Medical

August, 2007 - Native Rhode Islander Debbie Siciliano can still recall the fear and anxiety she felt after pulling a tick off her young son almost 10 years ago. Like most of the population, Debbie knew little about Lyme disease, so she immediately called her pediatrician to find out what to do next. She was not assured, however, when her doctor's advice was to simply wait and see if her son became ill. This doctor's guidance left her son without treatment and he developed severe symptoms of Lyme disease. Eventually, Debbie found a Lyme-literate physician who treated her son's symptoms of arthritis, fatigue, night sweats, and blurry vision successfully.

Though her son ultimately received comprehensive care, Debbie was discouraged by the inconsistent methods of treatment and the lack of knowledge about the disease. Lyme disease was on the rise around the country, but most people Debbie talked to did not seem to know how to prevent tick bites or to know what to do if they were bit.

In direct response to this growing need for Lyme disease awareness, prevention and treatment, Debbie paired with Diane Blanchard and other fellow mothers and started Time For Lyme, a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to raising funds for research on tick-borne illness, as well as for education concerning how to detect, prevent, and treat Lyme disease.

Debbie's efforts show the power that dedicated, passionate advocates can have. Time for Lyme has reached thousands of people through health fairs, educational programs, fundraising events, and through its website, www.timeforlyme.org. In partnership with the Greenwich, Department of Health and the town's public school system, Time for Lyme created an age appropriate school curriculum currently being used in the Greenwich schools and available for schools nationwide.

Time for Lyme runs a monthly support group in the community for individuals that suffer for Lyme disease and their families. Additionally, together with the national Lyme Disease Association, Time for Lyme has lobbied on the local, state, and national level for appropriate Lyme disease related legislation and funding. Today, companion federal bills in the senate and house offer the potential for \$100 million in additional funding for the education, research and prevention of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases (Senate Bill 1708 and House Bill 741).

Time for Lyme's most significant contribution to the fight against Lyme disease has been its fundraising efforts that have resulted in the creation of the Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases Research Center at the Columbia University Medical Center, opened in April 2007. Through the successful completion of four major fundraising events, Time for Lyme and the LDA donated three million dollars to help endow the research center at Columbia.

The Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases Research Center at Columbia University is the first university center in the United States to specialize in research for the study of chronic Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. The Center is focusing on clinical research to develop a reliable test for Lyme disease, to identify new kinds of treatment and to better understand the mechanisms of the disease. The identification of new and improved diagnostic tools and treatment are essential, but another important component of the Center is the dissemination of recent research findings through annual national medical conferences.

Twenty years ago, native Rhode Islander Debbie Siciliano never imagined she would become the Co-President of a major non-profit organization such as Time for Lyme. But when disease threatened her family, Debbie saw an opportunity to turn her suffering into a positive effort

towards the eradication of Lyme disease. Time for Lyme has made and continues to make a profound impact on the treatment and prevention of tick-borne illness under Debbie's guidance.

About Time for Lyme

Time For Lyme is an organization dedicated to eliminating the devastating effects of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness. Our mission is to prevent the spread of disease, develop definitive diagnostic tools and effective treatments, and to ultimately find a cure for tick-borne illness by supporting research, education, and the acquisition and dissemination of information. In addition, we will continue to act as advocates for Lyme disease sufferers and their families through support of legislative reform on the federal, state and local levels. For more information on our organization, please visit www.timeforlyme.org.