

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Eight-Year-Old March of Dimes National Ambassador to Tour Magee-Womens
Hospital with UPMC Health Plan President Diane Holder**

PITTSBURGH (March 5, 2007) — Eight-year-old Ezekiel “Zeek” Taylor, the March of Dimes 2007 National Ambassador who was born 14 weeks early and is traveling the country with his parents to share their remarkable story, will join UPMC Health Plan President Diane Holder and Magee-Womens Hospital President Leslie Davis for a hospital tour.

Zeek and his family will be visiting the neonatal intensive care unit at Magee-Womens Hospital at 5 p.m. today with Ms. Davis and Ms. Holder. Zeek and his parents, Betty and Corey Taylor of Durham, North Carolina, are helping raise awareness about the growing crisis of premature births, which have increased by more than 30 percent in the United States since 1981. Diane Holder was recently named Honorary Chair of the Pittsburgh March of Dimes WalkAmerica 2007.

“We are excited to be hosting this extraordinary family in Pittsburgh,” said Holder. “The March of Dimes is an integral part of the health care community in our region. Together we are working to improve the health of all pregnant women, and through fund-raising efforts such as WalkAmerica 2007, Magee-Womens Hospital and other community organizations receive much-needed support to help thousands of children just like Zeek.”

At birth, Zeek weighed just 1 pound, 14 ounces. His father spent many frightening days watching both his wife, Betty, and their son fight for their lives. Betty had developed complications 26 weeks into her pregnancy and was rushed to the emergency room at Duke University Medical Center. Doctors told Corey that his wife was in danger of heart

failure and coma, and the baby was in distress – they needed to perform an emergency Cesarean section.

While both mom and baby made it safely through the delivery, Zeek spent his first 103 days of life in the neonatal intensive care unit, fighting to survive. He was given surfactant therapy to help his immature lungs inflate between each breath, and he went on to fight and win one medical battle after another — anemia, abnormal blood flow from the heart, and newborn jaundice. Even after he went home, Zeek faced surgery to correct reflux problems, retinopathy of prematurity, hernias, and pressure on his brain due to meningitis, which developed as the result of a simple ear infection.

Betty and Corey were both deeply affected by their experience with Zeek's birth and are grateful for the medical advances — many developed by March of Dimes-funded research — that saved Zeek's life. "Our family is forever indebted to the March of Dimes," says Corey. "It's because of innovative research funded by the March of Dimes, and the specialized care Zeek received at birth, that he enjoys a happy, normal life. We can't say thanks enough for his remarkable outcome, and we look forward to sharing our story with families all across the nation."

WalkAmerica 2007 is a 5-kilometer walk scheduled for 9 a.m., April 29, at the North Shore Riverfront Park. WalkAmerica, the March of Dimes' largest fund-raiser, supports research and programs to help prevent birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. Since its beginning in 1970, WalkAmerica has raised more than \$1.5 billion to help give babies a fighting chance.

Every year more than 470,000 infants are born prematurely, and prematurity is on the rise. It now affects one out of every eight babies born in the United States. Prematurity takes a severe toll on America's families and strains our health care system. Each year, 100,000 children develop health problems because of their early births. Prematurity is also the leading cause of death in the first month.

Over the years, hundreds of UPMC Health Plan employees have participated in WalkAmerica. Last year, UPMC was the 11th largest team and corporate fund-raiser in Pennsylvania. Last year's event attracted an estimated 4,000 walkers and volunteers.

Those interested in registering for WalkAmerica should visit www.walkamerica.org or call 1-800-525-WALK. To read more about the March of Dimes visit www.upmchealthplan.com/health/index.html and click on “My 9 Months.”

About UPMC Health Plan

UPMC Health Plan, the second-largest health insurer in Western Pennsylvania, is owned by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), one of the nation's top-ranked health systems. The 2006 *U.S. News & World Report* NCQA listing of “America’s Best Health Plans” ranked UPMC Health Plan # 7 in the nation, making it the highest ranked plan in Pennsylvania. It has also led the nation in breast cancer screening for three consecutive years. The integrated partner companies of the UPMC Insurance Services Division – which includes UPMC Health Plan, Work Partners, EAP Solutions, UPMC *for You* (Medical Assistance), and Community Care Behavioral Health – offer a full range of group health insurance, Medicare, CHIP, Medical Assistance, behavioral health, employee assistance, and workers' compensation products and services to nearly 1 million members. Our local provider network includes UPMC as well as community providers, totaling more than 80 hospitals and more than 7,000 physicians in a 28-county region.

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