



## **15<sup>th</sup> Parkinson's Unity Walk, A Step in the Right Direction for Parkinson's Community**

### **Largest grassroots fundraiser in the U.S. once again a resounding success!**

**New York, May 7, 2009** – Amid unusually warm and sunny weather, family, friends and supporters, joined the more than 10,000 people once again in New York's Central Park on Saturday, April 25th to celebrate the 15th Parkinson's Unity Walk and show their community spirit while raising funds for Parkinson's disease research.

This year marked an incredible year for the event, the largest grassroots fundraiser in the U.S. for Parkinson's. "Even during a difficult economic period, that didn't keep the crowds from dedicating their time and energy to this amazing event. This year the Parkinson's community truly stepped it up to make the 15th anniversary one to remember," said Carol Walton, Executive Director, Parkinson's Unity Walk.

Contributing to the growing awareness of the Unity Walk is the passion, spirit and dedication of the Parkinson's community. In addition to the thousands of people who walked in Central Park, for the first-time ever, those unable to attend the event in-person were able to "virtually" walk alongside their community members. The Unity Walk teamed up with Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., the proud partner and premier sponsor for the ninth year, to create the first ever Virtual Parkinson's Unity Walk. By signing up at [www.unitywalk.org/virtual](http://www.unitywalk.org/virtual), and encouraging family and friends, anyone can still become involved in this important event and help to highlight and increase understanding and awareness for needed attention and support for Parkinson's. The website includes an interactive map of the United States that highlights the locations of "virtual walkers," demonstrating the community's commitment and involvement.

The 15th Parkinson's Unity Walk was truly a community education day, with opportunities for those in attendance to ask a physician questions, receive free literature and resources from the Parkinson's advocacy groups and from event sponsors. This year's event also included an international presence, with Susanna Lindvall, Vice President of the European Parkinson's Disease Association

addressing the audience, discussing the importance of worldwide partnerships in the fight against Parkinson's. The past, present and future of the Parkinson's disease community was also the focus of several other powerful speeches, including those from Former Attorney General Janet Reno, her third straight appearance, and Dr. Jean Hubble, Executive Director at Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

From individuals to large teams, walkers also had the chance to take commemorative photos at the Boehringer Ingelheim booth to remember the day and the time spent with loved ones who had gathered from all across the country.

In addition, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Inc. debuted the "Message of Hope" Wall, on which visitors wrote their own messages of hope and inspiration for other members of the Parkinson's community. In commemoration of the Walk's 15th anniversary, Solvay donated \$15 per message, up to 1,000 messages, to the Unity Walk and raised a total of \$15,000.

More than 10,000 people, including 430 teams that were created to honor loved ones who battle the disease, walked along the tree-lined, wheelchair-accessible, 2-mile circular path, proudly displaying courage, hope, optimism, compassion, and community togetherness.

And, as pledged since the inception of the Walk, every penny raised continues to go directly to Parkinson's research. This is made possible through the Unity Walk's Premier Sponsor and Proud Partner, Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., our Diamond Sponsors, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Teva Neuroscience and Valeant Pharmaceuticals International, our Platinum Sponsors LSVT Global, Medtronic, Novartis, our other sponsors, and the seven national Parkinson's disease organizations.

All funds raised from the Walk are designated for research and will be distributed among the major U.S. Parkinson's disease foundations, including the American Parkinson Disease Association, the National Parkinson Foundation, The Parkinson Alliance, Parkinson's Disease Foundation, The Parkinson's Institute, Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, and Parkinson's Action Network.

Parkinson's disease is a gradual neurodegenerative disease that affects more than one million Americans. To find out more about Parkinson's disease and the Walk, please visit our website: [www.unitywalk.org](http://www.unitywalk.org). You may also call us at 1-866-PUW-WALK (1-866-789-9255) or email us at [info@unitywalk.org](mailto:info@unitywalk.org).