



MEDIA KIT OVERVIEW

Childhood Stroke & Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois is a greater Chicago area support and information group formed in April of 2002. Our goal is to give families of children with hemiplegic cerebral palsy, hemiplegia, hemiparesis and/or childhood stroke a chance to connect and interact in person.

Our group is seeking to create awareness in Illinois that stroke also occurs in infants and children. There is very little known about this medical issue that affects hundreds of children in Illinois and thousands worldwide.

Contained in this awareness packet is the following information:

- CSHC of IL press release
- Media articles on Infant and Childhood Stroke
- Family Stories – Personal stories about how stroke has affected children and their families
- Infant and Childhood Stroke Fact Sheet
- New Treatments for Childhood Stroke – Presented by Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Dr. Deborah Gaebler-Spira
- CSHC of IL Contact and Fact Sheet

We are seeking to create further awareness in the community and hope that by receiving this kit, you will consider a story about:

- Infant and Childhood Stroke
- How families are affected by pediatric stroke
- Research for children affected by stroke
- Related topics

Many members of our CSHC of IL group, as well as the parents and children featured in the Family Stories and the doctors associated with the information in this packet would be willing to be available for interviews to enhance your story.

Your time and interest is appreciated!

For more information, contact:

Mary Kay Ballasiotes – E: info@cshconnections.org P: 630-854-4058

Please visit our website at www.cshconnections.org

The information contained in the Childhood Stroke & Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois website and media kit is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment, and CSHC of IL recommends consultation with your doctor or health care professional.



Childhood Stroke & Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois

Childhood Stroke and Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois provides a forum for parents, professionals and other interested persons to communicate effectively regarding children with hemiplegia. One of the main causes of hemiplegia (also called hemiparesis) is infant or childhood stroke. A primary goal of CSHC of IL has been to connect families dealing with hemiplegia to the resources that will bring these children to their full potential.

CSHC of IL, formerly PACHS, began in April 2002 when a group of parents began meeting to share information and local resources to help their children with hemiplegia and stroke. Meetings have aimed to give these children and their families a chance to interact in person, share educational information about therapy and medical treatment, and to network about medical providers and emerging research.

Families come from a wide area around Chicago. Support occurs through two primary activities: education by experts, which empowers families to provide complete care for their children inside and outside the home, as well as interaction with other families facing the same issues. CSHC of IL also connects families with researchers studying the effects of hemiplegia.

The group has incorporated and is awaiting final approval from the IRS for 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status. This will allow the organization to raise funds to provide appropriate programming to families and to provide resources that will increase awareness. We are continuing to work with the scientific community to connect interested families with researchers.

CSHC of IL has also become active with the Greater Midwest Affiliate of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. Through this connection, the group has been able to increase awareness of pediatric stroke to the general public.

For more information on Childhood Stroke and Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois, please visit our website at www.cshconnections.org or contact Mary Kay Ballasiotes at info@cshconnections.org, 630-854-4058 or P.O. Box 356, Bolingbrook, Illinois 60440.



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kids Have Strokes Too!

Childhood Stroke and Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois has been committed to increasing awareness of childhood stroke to the general public since its inception in April 2002. As more families share their experiences with our group, the need for more advocacy, education, awareness and research has become evident.

Infant stroke occurs in approximately 1 in 4,000 births each year. A stroke may occur before the child is born or around the time of birth. In addition, at least 6 out of every 100,000 children under the age of 18 will suffer from a stroke each year. With 10% of infant and childhood stroke victims dying each year, stroke is one of the top ten causes of pediatric death. Early intervention with medical professionals is encouraged so that children will receive therapeutic services they need to thrive and excel.

For over four years, CSHC of IL founder and president, Mary Kay Ballasiotes, has been committed to providing information and support to families in the greater Chicago area who are affected by childhood stroke. "I know this is an important issue for many families in the area, including my own. My daughter suffered a stroke before birth and I know first hand that most people know very little about this issue. The sooner a stroke in a child is diagnosed and treated, the better chance the child will have to recover. One of our group's goals is to increase awareness of childhood stroke among parents, the medical community and researchers. By providing a setting in which teamwork among parents, professionals, and other interested persons and organizations can be accomplished, we hope to connect these children to the resources, which will bring them to their full potential." Since research is an important factor for determining the best course of treatment and the cause and prevention in pediatric stroke, CSHC of IL urges anyone who has suffered a stroke at a young age, to take advantage of the many research opportunities in the Chicago area.

CSHC of IL has also been working closely with the Greater Midwest Affiliate of the American Heart Association to raise awareness about pediatric stroke. Through this affiliation, CSHC of IL has been able to reach out to families not only in our area, but in other states as well. "What we have created here in the greater Chicago area has been tremendously beneficial for our families", says Ballasiotes. "I would highly encourage others to do the same in their community."

CSHC of IL incorporated in January 2006 and is awaiting approval from the IRS for their 501c(3) status.

For more information and local family support about infant or childhood stroke, please visit the CSHC of IL website at www.cshconnections.org. Additional online support for childhood stroke can also be found at www.pediatricstrokenetwork.com and www.kidshavestrokes.org.

CONTACTS:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Learn and Live*SM

West Suburban Woman Fights to End Childhood Stroke

Bolingbrook Mom & Eight-Year-Old Stroke Survivor Walk in Metro Chicago Heart Walk

BOLINGBROOK – July 21, 2006 - Eight years ago, doctors delivered devastating news to Mary Kay Ballasiotes and her husband Mike: their newborn daughter, Michelle, had a stroke while still in the womb. Today, the Bolingbrook resident is fighting back by raising awareness of pediatric stroke through the support group she founded, Childhood Stroke and Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois (CSHC of IL).

On September 24, the proud mother of three will walk hand-in-hand with Michelle, and a team of 100 other family members and friends of pediatric stroke survivors affiliated with CSHC of IL, at the Metro Chicago Heart Walk at College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn. "I'm hoping that having a large group of participants in the Heart Walk will stimulate more awareness about childhood stroke," Ballasiotes said. "It's amazing to me how many of us there are out there." Ballasiotes and her group will don matching t-shirts saying "I know a childhood stroke survivor" or "I am a childhood stroke survivor."

Ballasiotes founded CSHC of IL after realizing the lack of support for families dealing with pediatric stroke. Today the group provides families of pediatric stroke survivors with information on doctors and specialists, research opportunities, meetings with guest speakers and a yearly family get-together. "One of our goals is to facilitate research," Ballasiotes said. "We have no idea what caused my daughter's stroke, which is the case with most of the parents in our group."

At 29 weeks of pregnancy, doctors told Ballasiotes that her daughter would most likely have hydrocephalus, an abnormal build-up of fluid on the brain. Three days after birth, Michelle's neurosurgeon detected signs of an old hemorrhage in her brain. "When we found out she had a stroke, it was just a matter to wait and see what the results of the stroke were," Ballasiotes said. "We were just lucky that she was diagnosed early so she could start right away with therapy intervention."

The effects of Michelle's stroke are mostly physical. At three months, doctors diagnosed her with hemiparesis, or the weakening of one side of her body. "Cognitively she's as bright as they come," Ballasiotes said of her Kingsley Elementary School third grader. Today, Michelle loves to swim, write, draw, read and play soccer and baseball, and her favorite subjects are writing and math."

Ballasiotes urges parents who have suspicions their child may have suffered a stroke to see a doctor. "If your instinct is telling you something is not quite right with your child's development, then get him or her into a specialist. It is better to know sooner rather than later." Ballasiotes said. "One in 4,000 babies has a stroke." Warning signs include delayed crawling and walking, abnormal muscle tone, possible seizures, and early hand preference.

This year, 18,000 walkers are expected at Metro Chicago walk sites in downtown Chicago, Palatine, Glen Ellyn and Tinley Park with a fundraising goal of \$3 million. All proceeds fund cardiovascular research and community education. For more information on the Metro Chicago Heart Walk, how to help CSHC of IL reach its goal of \$3,000 or how to participate, please visit www.heartwalk.kintera.org/metrochicago or call the American Heart Association at 312-346-4675. The American Heart Association thanks Terry Zink, president and CEO of Fifth Third Bank Chicago, for chairing this year's event. For more information on Childhood Stroke and Hemiplegia Connections of Illinois, visit www.cshconnections.org.

About the American Heart Association

Since 1924 the American Heart Association has helped protect people of all ages and ethnicities from the ravages of heart disease and stroke. These diseases, the nation's No. 1 and No. 3 killers, and other cardiovascular diseases, claim nearly a million American lives a year. The association invested more than \$439 million in fiscal year 2003-2004 for research, professional and public education, and advocacy so people across America learn what they can do to reduce their risk and live stronger, longer lives.

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