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Sickle Cell Walk Huge Success, Raises Nearly $10,000

WASHINGTON (Sept. 21) – More than 600 people turned out Saturday for the Stomp Out Sickle Cell 5k Walk/Run, twice as many as last year, organizers said.

The five-kilometer walk, sponsored in part by the Howard University Sickle Cell Center, raises funds and awareness for sickle cell anemia, a painful, life-threatening disease that primarily affects African Americans. Organizers said they received nearly $10,000.

“We are so grateful for the support of the University and others,” said Barbara Harrison, a genetics counselor, assistant professor in the Howard University College of Medicine’s Department of Pediatrics and director of community outreach and education for the Howard University Center for Sickle Cell Disease. “But it was the University that put us over the top. This will go a long way to our ultimate goal of stomping out sickle cell.”

Some walkers came from as far away as Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York. Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty issued a proclamation that was read before the walk naming the day “Stomp Out Sickle Cell Day.”

Angela Mason, community outreach coordinator for the Howard University College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, described the walk as “awesome.”

“It was great,” Mason said. “The volunteers did a fantastic job packing bags with giveaways, and we got a lot of support from companies like the Nielsen Ratings and government agencies like the National Institutes of Health.”
Also contributing were Georgetown University, the National Institutes of Health, Children’s Hospital, MOTTEP and Faces of Our Children and Giant Food, which provided bags, Frisbees, cup holders, water bottles, water and apples. The Howard University Bookstore donated two bags filled with books, school supplies and Howard shirts.

The walk began at 8 a.m. in Freedom Plaza on Pennsylvania Avenue between 13th and 14th streets in northwest Washington.

Sickle cell disease is a blood disorder that affects the red blood cells. The abnormal hemoglobin in these cells can cause them to make a crescent shape that can block small blood vessels. The blockage decreases the amount of blood reaching tissue, which causes painful complications and even death.

Sickle cell anemia affects millions of people worldwide, particularly families from Africa, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Mediterranean countries, India and Saudi Arabia.

In the United States, sickle cell anemia affects about 70,000 people, hitting the minority community the hardest. In about one in every 500 African American births are diagnosed with the condition. The condition occurs in on out of every 1,000 to 1,400 Hispanic American births. About two million American carry the trait of sickle cell.

Coordinators for the event included the Children’s National Medical Center, Center for Cancer and Blood Disorder, Georgetown University Hospital’s Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology, Faces of Our Children Inc., Howard University, National Institutes of Health and Sickle Cell Association of the National Capital Area Inc.