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Dr. and Mrs. John Forbes Nash, Jr. Support the Mission of Attitudes in Reverse® to Save Lives through Mental Health Education

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY (April 16, 2013) – “When we learned about Attitudes in Reverse® [AIR], we became instant supporters. This organization is providing a critical need for young people who seem to experience a tremendous amount of stress in their personal and academic lives, at a time when they are also experiencing major physical changes and statistically, the highest risk of developing mental illnesses,” said Dr. John Forbes Nash, Jr., the 1994 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics for his doctoral thesis on game theory and subject of the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*, and his wife, Alicia. “We admire the Bakers and support them wholeheartedly in their mission.”

AIR was established by Kurt, Tricia and Katelyn Baker of Plainsboro, New Jersey, in 2010, shortly after their son/brother Kenny completed suicide following a long battle against severe depression and anxiety. Their mission is to save lives by educating students about mental health, related disorders and suicide prevention. Dr. and Mrs. Nash are invited to be Honorary Chairs of AIR’s Second Annual Miki & Friends Walk & Run for AIR event. The event, which is being sponsored by PetSmart and Banfield Pet Hospital, will be held on May 18, 2013 in the East Picnic Area of Mercer County Park, West Windsor, New Jersey. In future years, the event will continue to be held on the third Saturday in May, which holds spiritual significance for the Bakers: it is close to the anniversary of Kenny’s death.

“We are thrilled that Dr. and Mrs. Nash support our mission to educate students about mental health and the fact that individuals with mental disorders can achieve great successes,” the Bakers said. “Dr. Nash is one example of many impressive and inspiring people who have succeeded in managing mental health disorders and contributing so much to the world, and Mrs. Nash demonstrates the importance of support from family members.”

“This message goes hand in hand with what we strive to communicate to students in middle and high schools and colleges: that mental health disorders can be treated and that individuals should not feel any shame or embarrassment if they need help coping with stress and difficult emotions, whether or not they develop any mental health disorders. We envision that one day, mental health disorders will be discussed openly, and

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treatment will be sought without hesitation and without stigma or any other barriers,” the Bakers added. “To achieve this goal – and, ultimately, to accomplish our mission of saving lives – we educate students about how to strengthen their mental health, recognize signs of mental health disorders and seek help when needed. We are pleased to have had opportunities to speak to more than 10,000 students in our first two years and that we have several engagements scheduled for the next several months. However, we’re just making relatively few steps toward meeting a tremendous need, and we are determined to forge ahead and deliver our vital message to as many students as we can.”

The Bakers were able to connect with the Nash’s through the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA), where one of AIR’s newest Board members, Shauna Moses, is the Associate Executive Director. NJAMHAA is a trade association that represents 180 nonprofit providers of mental healthcare and addiction treatment services. The organization’s Chief Executive Officer, Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., has been friends with the Nash’s for many years.

“I am deeply honored to know the Nash’s and now, the Bakers, and I am eager to do anything I can to support endeavors to eliminate stigma so it no longer imposes a barrier for individuals to seek treatment for mental illnesses,” Dr. Wentz said. “One out of every four individuals has a mental health disorder and, ultimately, everyone, including friends and family members, is affected. Untreated mental illnesses greatly increase the risk of substance abuse and suicide, which is the second leading cause of death among individuals as young as 10 and up to the age of 24. This staggering statistic could be reversed and the first step is to reverse attitudes about mental illnesses and treatment. Education is the critical first step, and I am proud to support the Bakers in their life-saving mission.”

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Attitudes In Reverse® (AIR) also includes an AIR Dogs: Paws for Minds™ program, through which displaced dogs with the ability to serve as Emotional Support Dogs, which are more than pets, are matched with individuals who have mental illnesses or developmental disabilities, thereby saving two lives with each match. For more information about AIR and its Walk & Run event, please visit www.attitudesinreverse.org.