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***Making A Difference For Alberta Families Facing Fatal Disease –
One Beautiful Bloom At A Time***

(KITCHENER, ON) Nov. 14, 2016 – Calgary and the surrounding area will be filled with gorgeous deep orange blooms of amaryllis this winter, thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Huntington Society of Canada’s (HSC) Southern Alberta chapter. Volunteer Karen Koester, who organizes the distribution and sales of more than 1,400 kits in the area, contributes to the Society’s annual campaign selling amaryllis bulbs to fund services for families grappling with Huntington disease (HD) and support research into treatments for this fatal neurological disorder.

She first got involved with the chapter 15 years ago because she had a friend with HD. Now, having got to know so many local families dealing with the disease, she has even more motivation to raise money for the cause.

“My friend is facing the daily challenges with grace, but this is a devastating disease,” she says. “It makes me happy to be able to help out.” And as she points out, not only will HD research benefit the families she knows, it also promises to yield important insights into other neurodegenerative diseases like ALS and Parkinson’s.

She credits the success of the Calgary campaign to good organization, a loyal and dedicated team of more than 40 volunteers and the generous help of the First Student Inc. school bus company.

While managing the logistics take some effort, selling the kits is easy. “All you have to do is get somebody to buy it once,” says Koester. “Then they get hooked.” After all, who wouldn’t want to brighten their winter with a spectacular splash of colour that lasts six to eight weeks?

The goal of this year’s campaign is to raise well over \$100,000 from coast to coast. Each attractively packaged amaryllis kit costs \$15 and contains one high-quality orange sovereign amaryllis bulb, soil, a pot and saucer, and growing instructions inside a beautiful gift box. It makes a great hostess gift or holiday present. And, of course, they support a great cause at the same time.

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The month of November, however, carries a particular significance because it's National Amaryllis Month. During this time, not only are our volunteers hard at working selling amaryllis kits, but the Society also hosts its annual Amaryllis Photo Festival. Photos of your blooming amaryllis (on its own or accompanied with your smiling faces or furry friends) can be posted to social media with the hashtag #HSCAmaryllis or sent to amaryllis@huntingtonsociety.ca. The winner will get to have their photographic masterpiece star on the HSC website!

To learn more about purchasing an amaryllis or becoming a volunteer seller, visit www.inspirehope.ca or contact the Huntington Society of Canada at 1-800-998-7398 or amaryllis@huntingtonsociety.ca.

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About Huntington Disease

Huntington disease (HD) is an inherited, debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease. Many more are touched by HD whether as a caregiver, a family member, or a friend. Huntington disease is devastating for both the body and the mind. The symptoms, which may include uncontrollable jerking movements and relentless cognitive and emotional impairment, usually present between the ages of 30 and 45, and gradually worsen over the 10-25 year course of the disease. Eventually they lead to total incapacitation and death.

About the Huntington Society of Canada

The Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease (HD). HSC is the only national health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with HD across Canada. HSC aspires to a world free from Huntington disease. For more information about Huntington disease and the Huntington Society of Canada visit www.huntingtonsociety.ca.

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