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Quebec woman raises awareness for Huntington disease across Canada ***May is Huntington Disease Awareness Month***

(KITCHENER, ON) May 7, 2015 – Knowing a family affected by Huntington disease (HD) prompted Marie-Claude Foisy to adopt HD as her personal cause. Marie-Claude has chosen to help raise awareness for HD this May during Huntington Disease Awareness Month.

Huntington disease is not pretty. The fatal illness slowly destroys brain cells, eventually leaving people unable to walk, speak or swallow. And it doesn't stop there. Because Huntington's is genetic, if you have HD, your children each face a 50 per cent chance of inheriting the fatal gene.

Marie-Claude Foisy saw the impact on a family she knew and decided she had to do something. So the Chartered Professional Accountant adopted Huntington's as her personal cause. "For me, giving is my nature," she explains. "I like to give back for everything I get in life."

In 2010 she joined the board of the Huntington Society of Quebec (HSQ), serving first as the organization's treasurer and now as its president. Marie-Claude loves using her business skills to help Quebec families dealing with HD. "We do something and we see the effect instantly," she says. "It's really concrete what we bring to people."

She lists the many ways that HSQ helps: the organization's social workers run support groups, educate long-term care staff and help families access resources. They offer a summer camp for people with HD, plus a retreat twice a year that gives caregivers a much-needed opportunity to relax and recharge.

One of HSQ's strategic goals is to establish a facility for people with HD, where staff understand the disease and can provide specialized care. When Marie-Claude first presented this vision to the Huntington's community, a woman in the audience began shedding silent tears of relief. For Marie-Claude, creating that kind of impact is priceless. That's why she also volunteers for the Huntington Society of Canada and sits on their national board. Her reach goes beyond Quebec her impact reaches across Canada.

But it doesn't take a business degree to make a difference. "Anybody can help," she says. "If you take a little of your time, a little of your money, it goes such a long way."

- 30 -

May is Huntington Disease Awareness Month. This year it comes on the heels of *Inside the O'Briens*, the newly released novel by award-winning, New York Times bestselling author and neuroscientist, Lisa Genova. Released on April 7, 2015, it is a poignant portrayal of the devastating impact of HD on Joe O'Brien, a 44-year-old police officer from the Irish Catholic neighborhood of Charlestown, Massachusetts. A devoted husband, proud father of four children in their twenties, and respected officer, Joe begins experiencing bouts of disorganized thinking, uncharacteristic temper outbursts, and strange, involuntary movements. He initially attributes these episodes to the stress of his job, but as these symptoms worsen, he agrees to see a neurologist and is handed a diagnosis that will change his and his family's lives forever: Huntington disease.

The novel is a good way to gain a better understanding of the impact of HD on generations of families. The Huntington Society of Canada is truly grateful to Genova for raising awareness of HD in Canada and across North America. To support the HD community and people like Erin, through the Huntington Society of Canada, visit www.huntingtonsociety.ca.

The Society is registered at Chapters Indigo fundraising initiative, visit ow.ly/LFcJS to purchase a Chapters Indigo gift card that can be used to purchase *Inside the O'Briens* or another book of your choice. Chapters Indigo will donate 10% of the value of your card to the Society.

Huntington disease is a debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and does not have a cure. The symptoms, which may include uncontrollable jerking movements and relentless cognitive and emotional impairment, usually present between the ages of 30 and 50 and gradually worsen over the 10-25 year course of the disease. Eventually they lead to total incapacitation and death. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease.

The Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada.

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