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Dogs Called Upon to March on Washington September 18 to Raise Awareness of Canine Cancer

With the rate of canine cancer reaching epidemic proportions, thousands of dogs and their owners are being called upon to march on Washington, DC, September 18 to raise awareness of the issue and memorialize those who have succumbed to the disease.

Those interested in participating in the 2009 Canine Cancer Caucus should assemble at Lady Bird Johnson Park at 10 a.m. on Friday, September 18. All dogs must be on a leash and socialized with other dogs. Owners are also encouraged to bring water for themselves and their canine companions, as none will be provided.

The walk will begin at 11 a.m. and conclude with a gathering at the Old Folklife Festival Site on the National Mall near Constitution & 14th streets. The event may qualify for a Guinness World Record for the largest dog march.

“Many people are surprised to learn that dogs get the same types of cancer as humans, including brain cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, lymphoma and melanoma,” said Luke Robinson, who is walking 2,000 miles with his two Great Pyrenees dogs over two years to raise awareness of the issue. “They are also getting it at a much more accelerated rate, which means the average lifespan of a dog is rapidly shrinking and could reach five to six years in just a few decades. This march is to bring awareness to this frightening issue and hopefully stimulate interest in the funding of canine oncology studies that will help not only dogs but also people.”

According to Robinson, dogs are “canaries in the coal mine” in regards to cancer in humans. Comparative oncology studies on cancer rates in dogs and people living in the same area could yield critical information in determining the causes of cancer. For example, if studies show humans and dogs living in the same area have higher-than-average rates for a particular cancer, then environmental factors may be the underlying cause.

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Robinson began his 2,000-mile journey in May 2008 after he lost his Great Pyrenees, Malcolm, to cancer and could not find any significant research into the disease's causes. He and his current dogs, Hudson and Murphy, will be participating in the September 18th march to raise awareness and celebrate the completion of 1,800 miles of their two-year walk from Austin to Boston.

After assembling at Lady Bird Johnson Park, participants will march across the Arlington Memorial Bridge and stop at the Reflecting Pool on the National Mall for a brief memorial service for those dogs lost to cancer. The march will then continue to the Old Folklife Festival Site, where Robinson will be joined by other speakers to discuss the canine cancer epidemic.

Dog owners interested in participating can look for updates about the march posted at www.2dogs2000miles.org. Additional information about canine cancer and Robinson's 2,000-mile walk are also available at the site.

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