



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release



BC transplant recipients travelling *Down Under* for World Transplant Games

VANCOUVER –A great sense of excitement is in the air for six BC transplant recipients gearing up to participate in the 17th World Transplant Games from August 22nd-30th on Australia's Gold Coast.

The six transplant recipients, aged from 11-66, will join the Canadian team in Australia to compete in a number of athletic events and promote the success of organ donation and transplantation, and to honour the donors who gave them the gift of life.

This year's 148-strong Canadian delegation includes 'Team SickKids', a team of 25 young transplant recipients organized by Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. The team includes one member from BC—11 year old Robbie Thompson from Courtenay, who has received two heart transplants—the first when he was just one year old, and his second nearly four years later.

Thompson will be competing in swimming and cycling and has been avidly training for both events. "Robbie went from doing the doggie paddle in March to swimming five laps," says Robbie's mom, Sue. For Robbie, the games are not about the medals but about participating. "I already have my heart, and I'm happy with that," he says.

Margaret Benson, a double lung recipient, and the BC representative of the Canadian Transplant Association (CTA), speaks about the organization's commitment to support athletic events such as the World Transplant Games, and their mission to encourage transplant recipients to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"The World Transplant Games is one of the most exciting opportunities a recipient could hope for," she says. "There is an incredible affinity and bond between the athletes which transcends language and culture. The CTA is proud to part of such a meaningful and unique event."

Benson is celebrating her tenth year post-transplant and has won many medals in past transplant games. She will also be competing in Australia this year.

The World Transplant Games was first held in 1978 in Portsmouth, England, with four teams and 90 competitors. Since then the event has grown significantly and now includes 68 member countries and 1,500 competitors. The games take place every two years and Vancouver was host in 1993.

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Over the past four decades, more than 4,500 British Columbians have received a life-saving organ transplant. BC Transplant is an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

BC's Organ Donor Registry (ODR) was introduced 12 years ago, and replaced the system of placing a decal on your Driver's Licence or CareCard. In 2008, the ODR was upgraded, making BC the first Province in Canada to introduce an online, completely paperless method of registering one's decision on organ donation. Currently, more than 720,000 British Columbians have registered on the Organ Donor Registry.



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