MARCH 07, 2005 - The Preeclampsia Foundation today announced its inaugural nationwide walk-a-thon, scheduled for Saturday, May 7, 2005, the day before Mother's Day. The timing of the event was intentional – preeclampsia affects approximately 200,000 pregnant women each year, some severely enough to take the babies' or even the mothers' lives. The goal of the event is to raise awareness and money to support patient education efforts.

Anne Garrett, founder of the Preeclampsia Foundation, said, "This is an opportunity to raise awareness about preeclampsia while honoring the mothers and babies we have lost to this terrible disease." Garrett, a preeclampsia survivor herself, will attend the Davenport, Iowa, walk-a-thon in honor of Shelly Bridgewater, a 5th grade teacher who died in January from complications of preeclampsia. "My family is 5th generation Iowans. I was grade school teacher when I nearly died of preeclampsia in 1996. I am walking for Shelly and for all the women like her who cannot celebrate Mother's Day this year."

Currently, the walk-a-thon locations include the following U.S. cities: Hope, Ark.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Denver, Colo.; Tampa, Fla.; Atlanta, Ga.; Evansville, Ind.; Davenport, Iowa; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Montclair, N.J.; Columbus, Ohio; Toledo, Ohio; Portland, Ore.; Pottstown, Pa.; Horsham, Pa.; Seabrook, Texas. In addition, a group has mobilized outside of the United States in Humber Bridge, U.K.

Those interested in participating are urged to contact the Preeclampsia Foundation's administrative office at (800) 665-9341 or via email to info@preeclampsia.org , though walk-up registrations will be accepted at each of the sites.

Preeclampsia and related disorders affect almost one out of every 12 pregnancies. Symptoms of preeclampsia include high blood pressure, swelling in the hands and face, and protein in the urine. If undetected or untreated, it can lead to stroke, kidney failure, liver failure and hemorrhage. It is responsible for 15 percent of all premature births. If the mother experiences seizures, it is called eclampsia. Both conditions can be disabling or fatal to mother and baby. By conservative estimates, these disorders are responsible for 76,000 deaths each year worldwide.