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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **THOUSANDS OF CYCLISTS DESCEND ON DEKALB FOR 32<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL BIKE MS:**

#### **TOUR DE FARMS, THE LARGEST CHARITY BIKE RIDE IN ILLINOIS**

*Two-day event expected to raise nearly \$1.7 million for MS research*

**DEKALB—June 22, 2013**—Eleven years ago, Tom Flood and his wife, Karen, were walking their dog around their neighborhood when he noticed that she was repeatedly catching her foot on the road the same way her mother, who lived with multiple sclerosis, used to. Mildly alarmed at the similarity, Tom urged her to see her doctor and request an MRI. Following her visit, they learned that Karen was living with MS.

“When Karen was diagnosed we were very familiar with the disease; her mother lived with MS for years,” said Flood. “Karen didn’t let it slow her down—she just kept charging forward, knowing it was the best way for her to personally deal with the disease—she decided to keep doing what she liked to do.”

In the spirit of charging forward, the Floods, who are residents of St. Charles, started participating in different National Multiple Sclerosis Society events and last year, participated in their first **Bike MS: Tour de Farms**, the largest charity bike ride in Illinois and the second largest annual fundraiser of the National MS Society, Greater Illinois Chapter.

“We both like to ride so we figured we’d give it a shot,” said Flood. “We tried Bike MS for the first time in 2012 and we both loved it. Unfortunately, with all the training we were doing in preparation for the ride, Karen suffered a leg injury that kept her off the route but she still cheered for the riders on Saturday and even volunteered on Sunday. We raised over \$3,000 the first year and this year we’re going for \$4,000.”

This year, Tom and an injury-free Karen, will join nearly 2,500 cyclists on Saturday and Sunday, June 22 and 23, for the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Bike MS: Tour de Farms, which starts and finishes at the Northern Illinois University Convocation Center, 1525 West Lincoln Highway, in DeKalb.

“I ride for a lot of reasons: the camaraderie, the social aspect, and the cause,” added Flood. “We ride to raise money for those who need help, and it’s another way I can support my wife, as well as others with MS. I can do it and some of them can’t, so why not? It makes me feel good and it’s easy to do; it’s my way of being a participant in the world.”

Cyclists choose to ride one or two days on one of many fully-supported route options, ranging from 15 to 200 miles, to accommodate all level of riders. Twenty support-and-gear vehicles stocked with first aid and repair supplies continuously patrol the routes throughout the day, and riders are additionally

supported with rest stops every 10 to 15 miles. Last year, more than 2,475 riders raised over \$1.66 million to benefit multiple sclerosis research, programs and services.

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For the second year, children under 12 years old can participate in a special Bike MS course exclusively for junior riders, on Saturday, June 22, at 3 p.m. All children must be accompanied by an adult and submit a \$15 registration fee. Also on Saturday, five Chicago-based bands will perform from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Residents of DeKalb and the surrounding communities are invited to attend.

"Bike MS offers an opportunity to accept the challenge of a great ride while raising funds for people living with MS" said Greater Illinois Chapter President and Bike MS participant, John Blazek. "With thousands of participants, this is one of our largest events of the year, and we're encouraged by so many people coming together to join the movement to end MS."

This year, Genzyme, a Sanofi Company, is sponsoring *I Ride with MS*, a mission-based program that celebrates participating cyclists who are living with MS through [MS One to One](#). Through the program, cyclists who are living with MS are provided a special "I Ride with MS" jersey. By providing visibility to riders living with MS, the program personalizes the disease and more strongly connects all cyclists, serving as a reminder of why they participate in Bike MS.

Bike MS: Tour de Farms is one of over 100 rides that happen across the U.S. that raises money for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Collectively the rides raise close to \$90 million annually with over 100,000 cyclists. For more information, visit [bikeMSIllinois.org](http://bikeMSIllinois.org).

**The National MS Society** addresses the challenges of each person affected by multiple sclerosis. To fulfill this mission, the Society funds cutting-edge research, drives change through advocacy, facilitates professional education, collaborates with MS organizations around the world, and provides programs and services designed to help people with MS and their families move forward with their lives.

**The disease affects more than 20,000 people in Illinois** and 2.1 million worldwide. For more information, visit [MSIllinois.org](http://MSIllinois.org).

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