

# Country Music Star Clay Walker Traveling the Country Sharing His Personal Success Managing Multiple Sclerosis

(NAPSA)—Multi-platinum recording artist Clay Walker is a busy man!

For the third straight year, Walker is hitting the road to share publicly his nine-year journey with multiple sclerosis (MS) and provide his unique message of hope and inspiration with thousands of others across the country living with the disease. His **Sharing Solutions for MS** patient program series begins in the spring.

He will make numerous stops around the nation, where he will speak at MS patient programs, participate in fund-raisers for MS research, and appear at other MS-related functions.

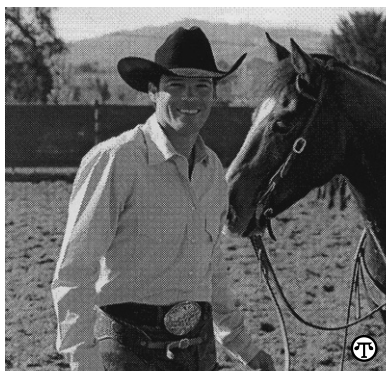
Walker was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS) in 1996.

In 2003, when he learned that only half of those living with MS are taking advantage of treatment, he decided to step off the sidelines and reveal his journey with MS and help people take a pro-active stance against this disease.

Since going public, Walker's two goals have been to raise money for research to find a cure for MS and to raise awareness of the importance of therapy in managing the disease. Although people respond differently to therapies, since beginning a daily injection almost five years ago, Walker has been in remission.

"When I was first diagnosed with MS and looking for therapy options, I read a story in the newspaper about a man who was taking a daily injection and was in remission," Walker said. "That story was so inspiring I asked my neurologist about it at my next visit. I hope my story will inspire others who are in the decision-making process. Ultimately, I chose my therapy because of its efficacy and safety. It has been studied for 12 years, and I just learned the study will be extended to 15 years. It is important to work with a doctor to find the right therapy."

Walker's emerging status as a leader within the MS community was recognized in 2003 by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS), which presented him



its most prestigious award—Ambassador of the Year—for his work in educating people about the importance of taking an active role in managing their MS. In addition, the NMSS again recognized Walker in 2005, naming him Honorary Ambassador for this year's MS Cycling Series.

"I kept my battle with MS private for more than seven years," Walker said. "It was very difficult to stand up and talk to others about it. Now this is something I feel like I was chosen to do; it's bigger than me. I want to inspire others with MS to take an active role in treating the disease because the worst thing they can do is nothing. My hope is other people will become empowered like I did, educate themselves about all the available therapies, and choose the one which is right for them. If I can convince even one person at every patient program to take ownership and take that first step, then it's been worth it."

Walker was also recently honored by the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), which created a clinical research fellowship in neurology in his name. That fellowship will be officially announced at the AAN Annual Meeting in Miami this April.

The success of Walker's treatment and lifestyle changes has allowed him to lead an active life and continue chasing his dreams. He gains confidence in his health with each new visit to his neurologist, continues to live each day to the fullest and enjoys many hobbies.

"Sometimes the damage is going on and you don't notice it until later," Walker said. "So when I go in and get an MRI, even if I

don't have any physical effects or visual effects from multiple sclerosis, I'm still worried something may have happened. However, every year I go in I get more and more confident because since I've started my daily injection, I haven't had one attack, not one. That's a big deal, and my MRI actually improved last year."

Cycling has become a recent passion for Walker, and he and several of his band members have committed to participate in select MS150 bike rides this year. To help prepare, Walker and his band have been training across the country at various stops on their concert tour, often enlisting the help of local cycling clubs that assist in mapping out the best training courses in their city.

"I still have my physical abilities," Walker said. "Being able to ride for the cause, being able to play golf for the cause, being able to sing for the cause—everything that I am now is about finding a cure for MS, raising awareness of the benefits of treatment and, along the way, making sure people out there know that just because you have MS doesn't mean you have to give up your dreams."

In 2003, Walker successfully launched his not-for-profit **Band Against MS<sup>SM</sup> Foundation**. Since then, the Foundation has given two research grants to the University of Texas Medical School in Houston. Walker's Foundation plans to present a grant to a leading medical institution each year to be used for research into a cure for MS.

"I feel fortunate that I've been able to manage my MS and continue doing the things I love," Walker said. "I owe this to the research which developed the drug therapy I take every day and the diet and lifestyle changes I've made. Through the **Sharing Solutions for MS** program series, I want to not only raise awareness, but also reassure people with MS their dreams can still come true."

For more information about living with MS and drug therapy, call **Shared Solutions**® at 1-800-887-8100. This is a free service for anyone affected by MS.