HEALTH AWARENESS

Wear Your Heart on Your Wrist

(NAPSA)—There are thousands of people who have the Marfan syndrome, which affects the body's connective tissue, but have never heard of it.

Without a diagnosis and treatment, affected people—even as young as 20 or 30—may die suddenly of a ruptured aorta (the large artery near the heart). There is good news. With a diagnosis and medical treatment, those with the Marfan syndrome can manage the condition and live a normal lifespan.

To increase awareness, the National Marfan Foundation (NMF) has made red "have heart" wristbands available through its web site, www.marfan.org. Money raised through this initiative goes directly to Marfan syndrome education, outreach and patient support. The "have heart" wristband project was made possible by Neuco Inc. in memory of Joe Neustadt who died of the disorder.

Said Carolyn Levering, NMF President and CEO, "Marfan syndrome is not as rare as once believed. We encourage people to wear the 'have heart' wristbands to heighten attention of this disorder because, in this case, knowing about the condition can be life-saving."

Marfan syndrome and related connective tissue disorders affect approximately 200,000 Americans. Affected people are frequently tall, with disproportionately long arms, legs, fingers and toes. They may have indented or protruding chest bones and scoliosis. They are often nearsighted and prone to other eye problems. The most dangerous problem is the risk for enlargement of the aorta, the large blood vessel near the heart.

Have heart: Wear a bracelet for Marfan syndrome awareness.

Getting a diagnosis is the first step to living with the disorder. Although the gene that causes the Marfan syndrome was identified more than 20 years ago, there is still no simple blood or genetic test for this disorder. Only after a careful skeletal exam, eye exam, heart exam and family history can the diagnosis be made.

The NMF was founded in 1981 to provide accurate and timely information about the disorder to patients, family members and physicians; to serve as a resource for medical information and patient support; and to support and foster research.

For more information about the Marfan syndrome, call 800-8-MARFAN or see www.marfan.org.