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FOUNDATION GIVES HOPE AND HELP TO 1,000 PEOPLE WITH CYSTIC FIBROSIS

This week, the Cystic Fibrosis Lifestyle Foundation (CFLF) helped its 1,000th person with cystic fibrosis (CF) live stronger and longer. Cystic fibrosis is a genetic disease that affects the lungs of 30,000 Americans. Whereas the average life expectancy was once in the single digits, it is now over 40 years of age. Much of this is due to improvements in medicine, breathing treatments and perhaps surprisingly, physical activity. Once considered harmful, regular exercise is now proven to be a crucial part of CF care.

The CFLF understands that some people cannot afford to prioritize fitness along with medical expenses. That is why it has given nearly half a million dollars in the form of Recreation Grants to pay for gym memberships, sports camps and more for 1,000 individuals with cystic fibrosis all over the U.S. ranging in age from 6 months to 80 years.

For CFLF founder Brian Callanan, this accomplishment is personal. "I was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis in 1976, when the average life expectancy was only 10 years old. No one told me to exercise; I just knew it made my lungs feel good." In college, Brian joined a competitive ski team and saw his lung function skyrocket. "I knew there was a link to physical activity and my health. And yet, I knew that not everyone in my situation could afford to be a gym rat or pay for sports for their kids. I wanted to figure out how to help them."

In 2003, Brian's dream became a reality. He formed the Cystic Fibrosis Lifestyle Foundation and kicked off its "live stronger, live longer" mission with an astounding bicycle trek from Canada to Florida. 14 years later, people all across the U.S. have participated in yoga classes, swimming lessons, horseback riding and even the World Transplant Games as part of Callanan's quest to keep them healthy.

The 1000th Recreation Grant was awarded to 44-year-old Kiley Lyon from Rock Island, IL. Diagnosed with CF at the age of 12 after years of misdiagnosed respiratory infections, he received his diagnosis at the University of Iowa. "When I was told I had Cystic Fibrosis, despite the fact that the average life span at that time was 18 years, I was relieved. I finally knew why I always felt terrible." Kiley used his Recreation Grant for a 12-month gym membership, something he feels has been critical to his CF health. "Working out is what has helped me to control my CF and not let my CF control or dictate my life." Kiley believes that with the support of his wife, exercise and his "never give up" attitude have allowed him to live a full, productive life.

The CFLF's Recreation Grant program was created in 2007 to help people just like Kiley stay active, strong, and keep a positive attitude. The CFLF plans to continue its "live stronger, live longer" quest as long as it takes. "The fact that we've made this one part of managing cystic fibrosis a little easier for 1,000 people is amazing," says Callanan. "We're going to keep at it until we've helped everyone we can, or until a cure is found."

To donate to the Cystic Fibrosis Lifestyle Foundation or to learn more about its financial assistance program, visit www.cflf.org or contact Brian Callanan at brian@cflf.org