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Meet Barry Sanders at Scleroderma Foundation's 28th Annual Walk and Run

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich., May 2007 – Football legend and former Detroit Lions star running back, **Barry Sanders**, will join the **Scleroderma Foundation (SF)** Michigan Chapter in its quest to find a cure for scleroderma by conducting an on-site '**Meet and Greet with Photo**' promotion at the Chapter's 28th Annual Walk and Run. The event will be held on Sunday, June 10, 2007 from 8 am – 1 pm at Shain Park in downtown Birmingham and is part of the National Scleroderma Foundation 'Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma Walks.' Proceeds from the event will benefit the Chapter's patient support, education and research efforts.

Sanders' involvement is inspired by his late sister, Nancy, who suffered from scleroderma and lost her battle with the disease in 1991. Scleroderma, or systemic sclerosis, is a chronic connective tissue disease generally classified as one of the autoimmune rheumatic diseases. The word "scleroderma" comes from two Greek words: "sclero" meaning hard and "derma" meaning skin. Hardening of the skin is one of the most visible manifestations; however, it can cause fatal internal organ problems.

Commenting on the event, Sanders' explained how important this cause is to him.

"My sister, Nancy, was taken from our family way too soon because of scleroderma. I owe so much of my success in football and in life to her influence. I am asking everyone – football fans and the general public alike – to partner with me and the whole Scleroderma Foundation team at this walk and run to raise awareness and critical funding needed for research to find the cause and cure."

Sanders will participate in the 3-mile walk, donate several collectable items for the auctions and will conduct a 'Meet and Greet with Photo' promotion. For a donation to the Chapter, guests can spend a few minutes with Barry and receive a photo with the football hero. Time will also be allotted for media interviews and photos.

"This walk and run is one of our biggest fund-raisers, and we want to use this year's event in Birmingham to reach thousands more to garner additional funds for important research and patient services," said **Jennifer Viano**, the Chapter's executive director. "Barry Sanders' involvement has made a dramatic difference in our ability to do just that."

Along with the 'Meet and Greet with Photo' offered by Sanders, the day's activities will include a 1 and 3 mile walk, 5k run, 1 mile fun run for kids, free yoga, massage and blood pressure screenings, lunch provided by **Outback Steakhouse**, a dunk tank, live music by **Beth Stalker**, silent and live auctions, prizes and a kid zone complete with clown, magician, face-painting, storytelling and a kids' auction.

The public is encouraged to get involved by walking or running, collecting pledges, making a donation, bidding on auction items or simply joining us at the event to show support. Registration is \$25 per person (by May 10; \$35 after May 10) and includes participation in the walk or run, lunch, t-shirt, goody bag and eligibility for prizes. A family of four can register for \$60 by May 10 or \$70 after May 10. Registration begins at 8 a.m.; 5k run begins at 9:30 am; 1 mile fun run for kids begins at 10:00 am; 1 and 3 mile walks begin at 10:15 am; and various event activities will be held from 9 am - 1 pm.

There is no known cause or cure for scleroderma.

"For now, we need to keep building awareness and funding to improve treatments and find a cure to ensure that this disease isn't a death sentence for anyone ever again," said Viano.

Actelion Pharmaceuticals is the National Platinum Sponsor of the Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma Walks. Other sponsors include Gold Sponsors **Key Foundation, Michigan Financial Companies, Outback Steakhouse and Franklin Bank**; Silver Sponsors **Bowne of Detroit, PhRMA**; and Bronze Sponsors **Rock Financial, Penske Corporation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Walgreens**.

.To register and create an online fund-raising web page, please visit www.firstgiving.com/28thwalkrun. For more information, interviews with local walk and run organizers, local medical experts or foundation executives, please call **Executive Director Jennifer Viano** at (248) 865-7259 or visit www.scleroderma.org/chapter/michigan.

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