

News Release from Anaphylaxis Canada

Anaphylaxis Canada welcomes Parliament's declaration of May as Food Allergy Awareness Month

"It means so much to me" - Sara Shannon, whose daughter Sabrina died of an allergic reaction

Toronto, May 4, 2010 - Anaphylaxis Canada applauds Parliament's motion recognizing Food Allergy Awareness Month and will be commemorating the occasion by promoting a number of initiatives intended to support the 1.3 million Canadians who live with food allergies. This is the first year such a month has been designated in Canada and will now be a permanently recognized occasion. Several other countries including the US, UK, Italy, New Zealand and Australia have similar declarations.

"The declaration of Food Allergy Awareness Month is a significant step in the ongoing effort to educate the public about food allergies," said Laurie Harada, Executive Director of Anaphylaxis Canada and herself the mother of a teenager with multiple food allergies. "We are thrilled that all political parties united to support this motion."

Food allergy is a growing public health issue in Canada. More than fifty percent of Canadians know someone with a food allergy. While allergic individuals must take responsibility for their condition, awareness and support of the community are key to keeping people, especially children, safe. Without treatment, anaphylaxis, the most severe form of an allergic reaction, can cause death.

In the visitor's gallery to watch Parliament vote on the motion was allergy advocate Sara Shannon. Sara's daughter, Sabrina, had her own advocacy efforts tragically cut short by a fatal anaphylactic reaction in 2003 when she was just 13 years old.

"This means so much to me," said Sara Shannon, "and it would have meant so much to Sabrina. In her short life Sabrina experienced many parts of Canada, from the mountains of British Columbia to the beautiful city of Montreal. She would want everyone to share in this country's beauty and possibility and would therefore be very pleased that the serious issues around food allergies are getting attention from our federal lawmakers."

Anaphylaxis Canada will be recognizing Food Allergy Awareness Month through a number of planned initiatives and events. This includes the organization's annual conference, hosted this year in Toronto, during which exciting new food allergy research will be presented by leading Canadian experts. Anaphylaxis Canada will also be launching two key initiatives for teens and young adults: a new French version of its website especially created for allergic teens to help them manage their food allergies more effectively; and the Sabrina Shannon Memorial Award for youth involvement in community anaphylaxis education. The award is dedicated to the life of Sabrina Shannon.

Anaphylaxis Canada