

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Former U.S. Army Ranger’s Story Will Encourage Americans to ‘Face their PHears’ for the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA)**

Silver Spring, Md. (April 2, 2015) – When he was 10, Carl Hicks fell from a tree and seriously fractured his left wrist. The tumble left him so afraid of heights that he couldn’t stand on a kitchen chair to get a glass from the cupboard.

Nearly a decade later, the U.S. Army Ranger School forced Hicks to face his fear head-on. He recalls scaling a several hundred-foot high granite cliff wall, one of the school’s many harrowing exercises simulating actual combat situations. With his face close to the rock, concealing his uncontrollable tears, Hicks’ sweaty fingertips gripped the slippery stone until he finally reached the overhang.

Hicks leaned on his Ranger training throughout his career. But the biggest test of his courage came in his personal life when doctors diagnosed his 13-year-old daughter, Meaghan, with pulmonary hypertension, or PH, in 1994. The debilitating lung disease can lead to right heart failure. For the next 14 years, Col. Hicks and his family were on the battlefield with Meaghan until she lost her fight against the disease in January 2009.

Today, at age 61, in Meaghan’s honor, Hicks, now Executive Vice President at the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA), continues to combat the disease. In an April 11 “Face Your PHears” fundraiser for PHA’s Lone Star Chapter, Hicks will rappel “Over the Edge” more than 350 feet down the 29-story Four Seasons Hotel Houston. He’ll do it wearing a zebra costume to illustrate that just as a zebra’s hoof beats might sounds similar to a horse’s hoof beats, PH is a life-threatening disease with symptoms similar to more common ailments like asthma and sleep apnea. With symptoms that include breathlessness, fatigue, dizziness and chest pain, many patients see three or more doctors before they get the right diagnosis.

Hicks’ participation in the “Face Your PHears” fundraiser has given it a surprising head start. The Four Seasons Hotel Houston is underwriting some of the event cost, along with providing in-kind support. When PHA’s Lone Star Chapter first approached the property’s public relations director Laura Pettitt about hosting the event, Pettitt was already familiar with the disease as one of her neighbors and close friends from high school, back in Gig Harbor, Wash., lost her life to PH. That friend, coincidentally, was none other than Meaghan Hicks, Carl Hicks’ daughter. It came as an incredible coincidence to Pettitt and PHA staff.

In conjunction with the Houston event, PHA is launching a “Face Your PHears” social media drive, asking Americans to post a selfie with a message about how they’re facing their “PHears” and make a donation to PHA to give hope to thousands of PH patients who Face their PHears every day. PHA relies on donations to fund PH patient and family support; early diagnosis education; specialty care resources; and research to find ways to prevent and cure PH. To support Hicks’ fundraising efforts as he goes “Over the Edge,” go to [www.phassociation.org/OverTheEdge/CarlHicks](http://www.phassociation.org/OverTheEdge/CarlHicks).

### **About the Pulmonary Hypertension Association**

Headquartered in Silver Spring, Md., with a growing list of chapters across the country, the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA) is the country’s leading pulmonary hypertension organization. Its mission is to find ways to prevent and cure pulmonary hypertension and provide hope for the community through support,

education, research, advocacy and awareness. PHA does this by connecting and working together with the entire PH community of patients, families and medical professionals. Among its programs, PHA facilitates more than 245 support groups around the country and delivers continuing education for medical professionals. Learn how you can join the fight against PH at [PHAssociation.org](http://PHAssociation.org).

###