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### **Just Shy of 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday, “Pacing Parson” Completes Four-Month, Cross-Country Walk for Pulmonary Hypertension Association**

PH Patients and PHA Staff Join Don Stevenson in Silver Spring, Md., for Final Yards of 3,000-Mile Walk

Silver Spring, Md. (September 23, 2015, 3:30 p.m. ET) – Ahead of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Don Stevenson (aka the “Pacing Parson”), a Seattle-area (Auburn, Wash.) retired minister and former U.S. Marine, has just completed a four-month, 3,000-mile cross-country walk, raising awareness and, so far, nearly \$10,000 in donations and pledges for the [Pulmonary Hypertension Association](http://www.PHAssociation.org) (PHA).

On Wednesday, September 23, joined by PHA support group patients and caregivers, Stevenson walked the final yards of his 3,000-mile cross-country journey. The end of the walk was Stevenson’s slowest, as PH patients struggle to breathe and require oxygen or daily medication to get around and, for some, even short walks can be laboring.

PH is high blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs, a debilitating disease that affects the functioning of the heart and can lead to death from heart failure. There is no cure and PH, while progressive, is often misdiagnosed as asthma or other less life-threatening diseases. Without treatment, the average survival rate is 2.8 years after diagnosis.

Stevenson and the PHA group crossed a periwinkle finish line, symbolic of the color of the lips of some PH patients when they lack oxygen. Periwinkle also represents hope and empowerment to the PHA community.

"We are both humbled and empowered by what the Pacing Parson has done to help PHA provide support for patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals and researchers in our collective fight against PH," said Rino Aldrighetti, PHA's president and CEO, at a short finish-line presentation. "PHA, which for 12 consecutive years has received Charity Navigator's top rating—four stars—for fiscal accountability and transparency, will celebrate our PH successes as part of PH Awareness Month in November and our 25th anniversary in 2016. We invite the public to support Stevenson's dedication to PHA's cause with a donation."

PH patients, caregivers, staff and healthcare professionals joined Stevenson's family, friends and fellow church members for the official kick-off of the cross-country walk on June 9 from Auburn, Wash. He continued to clock up to 30 miles each day, taking Sundays off to rest. Stevenson's journey for PHA is his 20<sup>th</sup> long-distance charity walk since 1998 to raise money and awareness for medical causes he supports, earning him the nickname the Pacing Parson.

Stevenson had believed a 20,000-mile charity walk he completed last year would be his final one. However, he felt compelled to support PHA after visiting fellow church member Betty Mayfield in the hospital before she died of the disease.

“I made a promise to Betty that I would walk for her and pulmonary hypertension before she died,” Stevenson said “I feel honored to be able to raise awareness for this devastating disease.”

Stevenson’s walk honors Mayfield, along with another friend who is struggling with PH, and a 14-year-old Kent, Wash., PH patient who recently underwent a heart and lung transplant. In 2010, Stevenson walked 1,200 miles around the perimeter of Washington State to help raise money for expenses related to the boy's surgery.

Stevenson followed a route along Highway 2 across the northern part of the U.S., then U.S. 50 through Ohio to Route 7 through West Virginia and Virginia. Each night, he catches up with his wife, Loretta, who drives ahead and secures overnight accommodations. The Stevensons ask hotels to sponsor their overnight stays, never having to pay for lodging.

Along the way, Stevenson met many who were honored to walk with him. Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Clint Romesha walked with him through Minot, N.D., PHA Executive Vice President Carl Hicks, who lost his daughter Meaghan to the disease, was at the kick-off event in Auburn, Wash., and then met up with Stevenson in North Dakota to walk with him. While in Michigan, he visited with PH patients at the world class University of Michigan (UM) PHA-accredited Pulmonary Hypertension Care Center. UM Medical School professor and center leader, Dr. Vallerie McLaughlin, a former chair of PHA's board of trustees, hosted the visit. As he walked through Ohio, he was celebrated at a “Buckeye Rally for Pulmonary Hypertension” at The Ohio State University’s Wexner Medical Center.

Using **#PacingParsonPHA**, PHA chronicled Stevenson’s journey on social media and online at [www.PHAssociation.org/PacingParson](http://www.PHAssociation.org/PacingParson).

The Pacing Parson’s victory reception was sponsored by PHA corporate partners Actelion, Bayer, and United Therapeutics and Lung Biotechnology. Other PHA corporate-partner support for the Pacing Parson’s charity walk included social media and marketing support from Gilead and Reata. Employees from PHA, Actelion, Bayer and Gilead joined Stevenson as he passed through their cities and towns across the country.

### **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. PHA relies on donations to fund its many programs, including early diagnosis efforts, more than 245 support groups around the country and continuing education for medical professionals through *PHA Online University*. For more information or to support PHA with a donation, go to [www.PHAssociation.org](http://www.PHAssociation.org).

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