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**SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED
BY NEW U.S. POSTAGE STAMP**

Stamp Design Unveiled at Annual Convention of Sickle Cell Disease Association

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – The U.S. Postal Service unveiled the Sickle Cell Disease Awareness commemorative stamp on Thursday evening, Sept. 25, at the 31st annual convention of Sickle Cell Disease Association of America Inc. Hosted by the Sickle Cell Disease Foundation of California, the event was held during the Dorothy Boswell Gala Awards Banquet at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. The Sickle Cell Disease Awareness stamp will be issued in September 2004.

“We believe this stamp will go a long way in helping to educate the public about this painful and devastating disease,” said Henry Pankey, Vice President, Delivery and Retail for the Postal Service, and the dedicating official.

It is estimated that more than 70,000 Americans have sickle cell disease and more than two million Americans have sickle cell trait, meaning they carry one copy of the gene for the disease. There is no universal cure for the disease, though many persons, given proper treatment, can lead fairly normal lives into their 40s and even beyond. Researchers continue to look for a cure and for new, more effective treatments.

“This stamp will also serve as another way for the U.S. Postal Service to continue its tradition of raising the public’s awareness of health and social issues. I am honored to have the opportunity to introduce this stamp,” added Pankey.

“I’m grateful to the United States Postal Service for its decision to issue this stamp,” said Lynda K. Anderson, President/COO of the 31-year-old Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. “It will help to increase public awareness and present the needs of a collective sickle cell community before the general public and policy makers, who can make a difference.”



Among the guests in attendance were the Honorable Katie Dorsett, Chair, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America National Board of Directors; Dorothy Moore, MD., Chief Medical Officer, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc; Donald Spigner, MD; Mablean Ephriam, Judge, Television Divorce Court; Actors Roger Mosley, Art Evans, Eriq LaSalle and Anthony Williams; Lee Bailey, Entertainment Industry; Entertainers/Actresses Kiki Shephard, Dawn Lewis and Natasha Pearce; and Prianona Davis, eight-year-old Sickle Cell Disease National Poster Child.

Sickle Cell Disease is common throughout the world, and people of all races should be screened to determine if they are a carrier of the inherited sickle cell trait or if they have the disease. A simple and painless blood test is all that is needed.

Although "sickle cell disease" and "sickle cell anemia" are sometimes used interchangeably, the general term, "sickle cell disease," refers to a group of inherited disorders that affect the red blood cells. Persons are usually diagnosed as newborns, though the disease can also be diagnosed in a fetus in the early stage of pregnancy.

Sickle Cell Disease is caused by an inherited form of hemoglobin, a protein that enables red blood cells to carry oxygen from the lungs, via the bloodstream, to all parts of the body. Red blood cells with normal hemoglobin, visible under a microscope, are smooth and round, and glide easily through blood vessels. In the bodies of people with sickle cell disease, after the carrier cells release oxygen they assume a curved or "sickle" shape and become hard and sticky, blocking blood flow and causing damage to organs. Other complications include episodes of intense pain, swelling, fatigue, jaundice, stroke and anemia.

Treatments for Sickle Cell disease include antibiotic therapy, supplemental oxygen, transfusions and bone marrow transplantation, a technique more successful in younger people. The drug hydroxyurea has been found to reduce the principal symptoms of sickle cell disease, apparently by activating a gene that triggers the body's production of fetal hemoglobin.

Since the mid 1950s, the Postal Service has issued stamps that highlight social awareness issues. Recently, these have included Breast Cancer Research, Organ and Tissue Donation, Prostate Cancer, Hospice Care, Adoption, Diabetes, AIDS Awareness, and Neuter or Spay.

For the sickle Cell Disease stamp design, stamp illustrator and designer James Gurney of Rhinebeck, N.Y., created a tender image of a mother holding her baby. Featuring the inscription "Test for Sickle Cell," the design conveys the importance of early testing. Gurney, best known for his highly acclaimed *Dinotopia* books, created 15 U.S. postage stamps for the 1997 World of Dinosaurs commemorative pane.

Starting Sept. 29, 2003 you can see the Sickle Cell Disease stamp online by opening this press release at www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A selection of stamps and other philatelic items are available at the online Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. In addition, custom-framed art prints of original stamp art are available at www.postalartgallery.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 141 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68.9 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U. S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume — some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves seven million customers each day at its 40,000 retail locations nationwide.

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