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## **Dalhousie University’s Pharmacy Student honoured as a national champion for the Huntington Society of Canada**

(Kitchener, ON) February 24, 2014 – February is Champion of Hope Month at the Huntington Society of Canada (HSC). The Society is pleased to honour, Dalhousie student, Ally Hurst, as a Champion of Hope donor who has, and continues to, demonstrate commitment to making difference in the lives of those affected by Huntington disease (HD).

Ally has been involved with Huntington disease since she was 11-years-old. She remembers waking up early to feed and dress her mother who suffered from HD. With her dad working full-time, a lot of the cooking, cleaning and general care giving duties fell to Ally and her three sisters. “You have to grow up a lot earlier than your friends do,” says Ally.

Ally and her mother shared a special bond most kids her age and their mothers didn’t. Her mom taught her the importance of life, patience and staying positive. Ally admits that it was hard seeing other kids doing mother-and-daughter things, like going shopping or catching a movie, but wouldn’t change the relationship they had for anything.

Growing up Ally got to know the staff at the Huntington Society of Canada at an early age. She remembers all the encouragement and support the family got from the local HSC resource centre director, who would take Ally out for regular one-on-one chats. Their local chapter was also there for them, helping the Hurst’s navigate the tricky waters of Huntington disease. As time went on, Ally got more involved with the organization, participating in conferences and eventually helping to found HSC’s youth chapter, Young People Affected by Huntington Disease (YPAHD).

In 2008, her mother has passed away. Huntington disease continues to play a major part in the Hurst family. The road ahead may be uncertain, but that’s not stopping her from living life to the fullest. She’ll be graduating this year from Dalhousie University and starting her career as a pharmacist. Wedding bells are also in her immediate future as she makes plans to move out west with her fianc .

Ally’s commitment to HSC remains rock solid. She continues to play a leading role in YPAHD and looks forward to a steady paycheque so she can bump up her monthly donations to the Society. “The Huntington Society of Canada is something that is really close to my heart,” she says. “I would rather spend money on that than anything else.”

For the past five years, Ally has given back and has been a member of HSC’s Champions of Hope program. The small amounts charged to her credit card each month make it easy to be a regular

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donor, even on a student’s budget. “You don’t have to think about it,” she says. “I think it’s a great thing for people to do.”

Huntington disease is a debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. Every child whose parent has Huntington disease has a 50% chance of inheriting the disease. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 are at-risk of developing the disease. HD is a “closet” disease, meaning the majority of those who suffer choose to suffer in silence because of the devastating impact both physically and mentally. HD is like experiencing the symptoms of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and Schizophrenia all in one disease. Genetic discrimination is a major reason why people choose to hide their diagnosis and as a consequence they live in isolation with little support. There is no proven treatment or cure.

The Huntington Society of Canada aspires to a world free from Huntington disease (HD). The Society strives to: maximize the quality of life of people living with HD by delivering services; enabling others to understand the disease; and furthering research to slow and to prevent HD. HSC is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada. The Huntington Society of Canada aspires to a world free from Huntington disease.

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