

Actress Mary McDonnell Dances with Lyme Fundraiser

✖ New York Governors Office and Celebrities Take on Debilitating Disease

Oct 18, 2002 – Oscar-nominated Actress Mary McDonnell will serve as honorary chairperson of a benefit dinner to raise money to create the first Lyme disease research center of its kind in the United States at Columbia University. The Time for Lyme benefit dinner, which is open to the public, will be emceed by NBC's Chuck Scarborough and actress Jayne Atkinson, who stars on Broadway in the production of Our Town with Paul Newman. Funds raised at the event also will be directed at Lyme disease education, prevention, and other types of research programs.

Lyme can cause neurological, arthritic and severe joint problems. An estimated 90 percent of the cases of Lyme go unreported. Actress McDonnell embraced the needs of Lyme patients after her cousin's husband died. McDonnell's family learned he died of Lyme only after his death. "If physicians were better educated to identify Lyme, he may have lived. We need to raise money to help the thousands out there still suffering when they don't have to," says McDonnell.

The benefit begins at 6 p.m. on Friday, October 18, at Manhattan's Sky Club, which is located at 200 Park Ave. on the 56th floor, and includes a cocktail reception, live and silent auctions, and live entertainment. The Lyme disease Association (LDA) and the Greenwich Lyme Disease Task Force (GLDTF) are sponsoring the event and already have donated \$700,000 to Columbia University, but \$3 million is needed to make the center fully operational. New York Governor George E. Pataki also is supporting the benefit. And honorary committee members for the benefit include: Jayni and Chevy Chase, Tommy Hilfiger, Sonia and Paul Tudor Jones, Magee Hickey, and Ellen and Chuck Scarborough.

Brian Fallon, MD, associate professor of clinical psychiatry and director of the current Lyme Disease Program at New York Psychiatric Institute, will be the Center's director. He is considered by many to be the leading expert on neuropsychiatric manifestations of Lyme disease.