

## **Remarks of Pat Smith, President, Lyme Disease Association to Gear Up for Lyme (VT) 2012**

I regret that my schedule has prevented my attendance at Gear Up for Lyme and have asked Dr. Stephanie Woolwich-Holzman to speak on behalf of the Lyme Disease Association (LDA) at this inspiring event dedicated in part to ending the spread of Lyme disease which has swept across the world, now found in approximately 65 countries.

Over 2011-2012, the LDA gave a grant entitled “Black-Legged Tick Population Dynamics and Lyme Prevalence in Vermont,” to a researcher at Lyndon State College in VT to help determine the geographical spread of the deer tick in Vermont with tick collection from South to North.

Evidence from other research and CDC Lyme disease reported case numbers is showing that the black legged (deer) tick populations are moving northward in the US. In 1990, Vermont had 11 reported cases of Lyme disease and the US had 7,943 reported cases. In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reported 356 cases of Lyme in Vermont. Contiguous neighbor states reported increasing numbers in 2010: New Hampshire 1,339; Massachusetts 3,263 and New York 3,425.

Ten times more cases occur than are reported—meaning 3,560 new cases in Vermont and 301,580 in the US in 2010. LDA did an analysis of 2010 CDC case numbers showing that 34% of Lyme cases come from states across the US other than the 9 states in the Northeast. The numbers show that VT had 1% of the total national numbers. See [www.LymeDiseaseAssociation.org](http://www.LymeDiseaseAssociation.org) for the graph.

Finally legislators are beginning to take notice. In May, Congressman Chris Gibson (NY) held a forum in NY to discuss plans for Lyme disease, having speakers and discussion panels. I sat on several of those panels. In July, US Senator Jack Reid of Rhode Island held a press gathering there which included federal officials to discuss Lyme disease. Last week, US Senator Richard Blumenthal (CT) held a state meeting on Lyme disease.

On July 17, 2012, US Congressman Christopher Smith (NJ) held the first ever hearing on Lyme disease in the US House in the Foreign Affairs Committee: Africa, Global Health & Human Rights Subcommittee. Testimony on Lyme brought out the global spread, the animal studies which show persistent infection after treatment for Lyme, the problems of diagnosis and treatment by treating physicians, and my testimony which included the country-wide spread with the impact on patients and treating physicians. A patient who has recovered with long-term treatment discussed his journey and a representative from the UK discussed the mounting problems of Lyme in Europe. The hearing video and written testimonies are available on the LDA website.

The Lyme Disease Association is an all volunteer national non profit working hard on behalf of patients to raise monies for educational programs and brochure distribution, ~ 2 million pieces of literature to date, to raise monies for uninsured children through the LymeAid 4 Kids fund, which has disbursed close to a quarter of a million dollars nationwide to date and to raise monies for research.

Research funded by LDA has been acknowledged in 25 medical journals and LDA helped establish an endowed research center for chronic Lyme at Columbia University to help find better diagnostics and a cure for Lyme disease. The Manchester Rotary has become a partner in that effort by hosting this annual Gear Up Bike Climb, and donating a portion of the funds to LDA for its mission. Everyone should be concerned about the spread of tick-borne diseases, especially those who are at high risk through their occupation or outdoor recreational pursuits. Your participation here helps you maintain health and helps provide answers to questions about Lyme disease. Kudos to the Manchester Rotary for organizing an outstanding event and to those who devoted their time to staffing it and to the Holzmanns. Thanks to you all for your continued participation. Together, we can conquer Lyme disease.