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NEWS RELEASE

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(For immediate release)

FAIRFIELD MEDICAL CENTER PHYSICIAN VISITS WASHINGTON D.C. AS ADVOCATE FOR AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY

LANCASTER, Ohio (May 4, 2009) – Recently Dr. Stephanie Ott, Fairfield Medical Center Rheumatologist, visited Washington D.C. as an advocate for the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), Fairfield Medical Center, and Rheumatology patients. Every year the ACR sponsors representatives from each state to travel to Washington D.C. to have their voices heard regarding the Rheumatology field and issues of importance to their patients.

Dr. Ott along with Dr. Ed Herzig from Fairfield, Ohio and Marie Gemelli-Carroll, a patient from Cincinnati, Ohio, were chosen to represent the state of Ohio. They spoke with Ohio Senators regarding issues related to the Rheumatology field. One such issue was the importance of bone density scanning, which is a very crucial screening test, and the decreased reimbursement hospitals receive for administering this test. They were also there to raise awareness regarding the Arthritis Prevention and Cure Act. One very important aspect of this act addresses that currently, there are only 270 Pediatric Rheumatologists in the entire United States, and nine states as well as the District of Columbia do not even have one. Dr. Ott spoke passionately about this subject, "The more awareness and funding that is raised, the more people we can get involved in this field and take care of children with arthritis." Another important issue they advocated for was to ask Congress to take a role in stopping insurance companies from charging patients a new level of prescription cost called Tier 4 pricing. This can increase the cost of much needed life saving and altering medications and procedures from a reasonable co-payment to sometimes 20% or even up to 50% of the cost of the drug or procedure. This has and does keep many patients from receiving the care needed to improve or even save lives.

Dr. Ott said that they met personally with Congressman Steve Austria and his Chief of Staff and Congressman Driehaus and his staff. They also met with the legislative assistants for Senator Voinovich, Senator Brown, and Congressmen Latta and with the policy advisor for Congressman Boehner, Leader of the Minority Republican Party in Congress. Dr. Ott

commented about her visit, “We actually talked with Congressman Driehaus himself with two of his staff members and also briefly with Congressman Steve Austria and mostly with his Chief of Staff. When meeting with Congressman Steve Austria specifically, I felt that he was very empathetic and willing to listen and hopefully to support us. I felt many of the offices we met with, in particular both of our state representatives, were receptive and open to our concerns. It was an amazing, awe inspiring, eye opening experience! It was very humbling indeed to be in these offices and the Capital representing Fairfield Medical Center, the ACR and all patients needing Rheumatology services.”



From left Dr. Ott and Dr. Herzig pictured in Washington as advocates for the American College of Rheumatology.

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