

Tom Hanks' "Space Mouse" Canada Bound MDS Nordion to Give Statue to The Hospital for Sick Children

September 28, 2005 TORONTO: "Space Mouse" is Canada bound and headed for The Hospital for Sick Children, thanks to Canadian pharmaceutical company MDS Nordion, who logged the winning bid for the 6 foot tall, 700 pound Mickey Mouse statue. Designed by Tom Hanks, "Space Mouse" was one of the more popular 75 person sized Mickey Mouse Statues auctioned by Sotheby's and the Walt Disney Company as the culmination of celebrations commemorating the 75th anniversary of the world's most famous mouse. "Space Mouse sold for \$15,000 US, which will benefit The James Fund, Canada's leading fund fighting neuroblastoma, a deadly form of childhood cancer. Hanks is the James Fund's Honourary Patron.

The James Fund was established in his name to fight the disease that ultimately killed him 3 ½ years ago at the age of eight. The James Fund, housed within SickKids Foundation, is both the only Canadian charity and the only family run fund selected to benefit from the sale of one of the Mickey figures. Tom Hanks designed "Space Mouse" with James in mind having befriended him over the phone and through letters where they shared with each other their mutual fascination about space. Hanks also starred in James' favourite movie, "Apollo 13," the true story of three astronauts who battled incredible odds to make it back home when all seemed lost.

"We couldn't be happier that Space Mouse will live at The Hospital for Sick Children where James received such excellent care," said an elated Syd Birrell, James' father, who attended the exclusive auction preview party with his family, and then a week later, the auction in New York. "That MDS Nordion is helping us remember James in this way while lifting the spirits of other ill children and their families speaks volumes about the culture of the company and the good hearts of the people who work there. Disney made the experience truly special and memorable -- and of course, we are so very grateful to Tom Hanks who set this whole thing in motion," he added.

"When I have to make the choice, it will always be to keep battling cancer," James once said. "I am not giving up!" Of the Fund that bears his name, he said, "With all this experimenting, they'll get it figured out and then all the kids with neuroblastoma will be able to survive."

Those words have galvanized the team of James Fund scientists as they work towards a day when no child will suffer the horrors of this disease, which claims a child somewhere in North America every sixteen hours.

James' remarkable and spirited fight against neuroblastoma is the subject of an uplifting and inspiring book by his father Syd called "Ya Can't Let Cancer Ruin Your Day." With a foreword by Tom Hanks, the book is the collection of journals Syd wrote and shared via email throughout James' five-year illness, chronicling not only James' fight against cancer, but also the extraordinary adventures they shared as a family as they tried to pack as much living into the very short time they had left with James.

The book, which was released this summer with the generous support of MDS Nordion, has sold briskly, available both at www.greentrainbooks.com and at select Chapters and Indigo stores and also at Indigo.ca (\$19.93, the year of James' birth). A portion of the proceeds from each book benefits The James Fund at SickKids.

The James Fund (JF) was established at SickKids Foundation by the family of James Birrell to generate funds and knowledge leading to new therapies for the treatment of patients with neuroblastoma. It has rapidly grown to be Canada's leading neuroblastoma research initiative and actor Tom Hanks is its Honourary Patron. To date, nine research projects have been funded, six papers published, a drug-testing unit has been established and several international collaborations are underway bringing new hope to the parents of children suffering from this terrible childhood cancer.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: SYD BIRRELL AND FAMILY AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW; B-ROLL, HEADSHOTS AND ART AVAILABLE INCLUDING OF JAMES ALSO OF SPACE MOUSE, EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW PARTY AND AUCTION; BOOK AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW.

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