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Press Release

West Michigan Chapter to promote the North Country Trail as a Health Travel Destination

Lowell, MI; April 11, 2017: The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) announces a 2017 partnership with Parkinson's Association of West Michigan (PAWM) to promote the use of its trail and the benefits of hiking for people with Parkinson's Disease and their families. Both organizations serve the West Michigan community, with the 4600-mile national trail meandering through the western counties of Michigan and continues to North Dakota to the west and New York in the east.

"Both organizations will benefit from this partnership," says Paul Spoelstra, a NCTA board member and a hiker recently diagnosed with PD. "The Parkinson's community will benefit from enjoying the many scenic and personal experiences that the trail offers as well as providing a much-needed exercise component of symptom management. The NCTA will benefit from further use and exposure of its well developed trails and family experience offerings."

The NCTA offers a unique incentive to PAWM members by encouraging them to join in its 2017 Hike 100 Challenge. By joining in this challenge, which was successfully introduced in 2016, will provide those dealing with PD and their family members a reachable goal. "I did it," can be that extra incentive to get out on the NCT and receive the many benefits that the trail and exercise can deliver. The benefits of hiking are critical for people with PD as it promotes variety in exercise activities by requiring balance and flexibility in the body. The NCT can truly become a health destination for this community.

In addition, the West Michigan Chapter and PAWM will jointly seek to accomplish in 2017 increased awareness on their respective social media efforts. A kickoff event highlighting an accessible and easy section of the trail, as well as other hikes for those that are up to more of a challenge. A committee, leveraging members from both communities, has been formed to develop ideas to promote the trail usage beyond 2017.

About North Country Trail Association (NCTA)

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) unites individuals, affiliated trail groups, local chapters, corporate sponsors and others linked in support of building and maintaining the North Country National Scenic Trail, and telling its story. A not-for-profit membership organization of volunteers along the seven-state trail and elsewhere, the NCTA partners with the National Park Service in bringing the North Country Trail to local communities. NCTA chapters support members as they "adopt" and maintain a section of

trail, sponsor hikes and other social events in local trail communities, and plan and conduct major trail-building projects.

About Parkinson's Association of West Michigan (PAWM)

The Parkinson's Association of West Michigan seeks to improve the quality of life and well-being of all people with Parkinson's Disease, their caregivers, family and healthcare professionals through support services and educational programs. We support efforts to find new treatments and a cure.

For more information, please contact Bruce Matthews (NCTA) at 616-897-5987 or Brian Toronyi (PAWM) at 616-862-4354