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National Multiple Births Awareness Day – May 28, 2005

Multiple Births Canada (MBC) and its local chapters are proud to announce the creation of National Multiple Births Awareness Day, to be celebrated for the first time on May 28, 2005.

This new initiative will guide Canadians to a better understanding of the challenges faced by multiple-birth individuals and their families. Those issues include the need for supplementary medical care and monitoring, low birth weight babies, and the exceptional physical and bonding demands placed on parents. "In 2005, we'll be focusing on improving Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) benefits for multiple birth parents," says Gail Moore, Director of Communications for MBC.

MBC will celebrate National Multiple Births Awareness Day at the Dionne Quints Museum in North Bay, Ontario on May 28, 2005. Various local chapters of MBC will hold joint celebrations in their own communities across Canada on the same day.

The date is significant in that it represents the birth date of the Dionne Quintuplets, a true turning point in Canada's history of understanding the multiple-birth experience. Visiting the Museum is an emotional experience, because as parents of multiples we realize the loss associated with the events that transpired in the 1930's. We mourn for the lack of bonding between the parents and their daughters. We grieve the absence of family cohesiveness. We understand and are thankful for all that the Dionnes have quietly accomplished, making sure that this history is never repeated for other Canadian families, leaving the museum as a legacy of "what should not" have been.

Annette and Cécile Dionne, the surviving Dionne quintuplets, are supporting the efforts of MBC in launching the annual celebration of National Multiple Births Awareness Day. In a statement issued to MBC in January 2005, they endorsed the need for more public education regarding the challenges faced by multiple-birth individuals and their families. Those unique needs include exceptional demands placed on parents, bonding obstacles with co-multiples, siblings and parents, and the balance of individuality within the multiple-birth relationship.

"We encourage all Canadians to become more aware of the social support systems available to this unique community. Further, we believe that current EI payments don't address the needs of multiple birth families; consequently we'd like to encourage dialogue for change," state Annette and Cécile Dionne.

MBC is the only national organization supporting Canada's multiple birth community, estimated at over 150,000 families with multiples under the age of 20. While the overall Canadian birth rate is declining, the multiple birth rate continues to grow at a rate of 2.3% annually.

Membership in MBC is open to anyone who supports its mission of improving the quality of life for multiple birth individuals and their families in Canada.

For further information, visit www.multiplebirthscanada.org.

