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Atlanta Braves First Baseman Highlights Importance of Skin and Sun Safety during Melanoma Awareness Month

The Melanoma Research Foundation partners with Freddie Freeman to underscore the need for early detection, sunscreen protection and skin screenings

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When the Atlanta Braves’ first baseman, Freddie Freeman, was just a child, he lost his mother to melanoma, the deadliest skin cancer. As a tribute to her memory, and in recognition of both Melanoma Awareness Month and Mother’s Day, Freeman is joining forces with the Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) to raise awareness of melanoma and ways people can reduce their risk of developing this deadly disease.

“My mother passed away from melanoma 13 years ago,” says Freeman. “I don’t want anyone to go through the experience my family went through as a result of this skin cancer. That’s why I’m partnering with the MRF – to help the public better understand the steps they can take to reduce the risks of melanoma for both themselves and their loved ones.”

Freeman was just four years old when his mother, Rosemary, was diagnosed with melanoma after a physician spotted a mole on her back. Though she was in remission for most of his earliest memories, the cancer returned less than one month before her five-year, cancer-free milestone.

“The MRF applauds Freddie for his commitment to calling attention to the risks of melanoma. Everyone can understand the tragedy of losing a mother to cancer – what people don’t understand is that it’s becoming increasingly common to see people dying of this disease,” says Tim Turnham, Ph.D., Executive Director of the MRF.

Melanoma is the second most common cancer for young adults ages 15 to 29 and diagnoses are increasing at a time when the number of young people using tanning beds has also risen to record levels.1

“May is when people start heading out for summer vacations in the sun and exposing themselves to one of the largest known risk factors for this disease – UV radiation,” continues Turnham. “Based on this strong connection between melanoma and UV overexposure, the message is very clear: protect your skin, reduce your exposure to reduce your risk.”

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. When caught early it is largely curable, but once the cancer has spread to other organs the median life expectancy is less than a year. Frequent skin screenings, early detection and a strong focus on prevention are all necessary to ending the rise in melanoma cases.

With May commonly bringing warm weather and an increase in outdoor activities, UV protection is imperative. Despite the role of UV exposure in melanoma, people often forget to use sunscreen, don’t apply enough or don’t re-apply frequently enough. Approximately 77,000 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in the United States in 2013, and a recent study showed that even after a diagnosis, one in four people will still skip sunscreen application.\textsuperscript{2,3}

Freeman takes sun protection seriously, applying sunscreen 30 minutes before the first pitch and reapplying during games. He also wears long-sleeved shirts during particularly sunny games, saying that these are just a few of the quick and easy steps he takes to reduce his risk of melanoma.

For the best protection, sun goers should look for sunscreens that are SPF 30 or higher and labeled as “broad spectrum.” Additionally, shoppers should be mindful of the water resistance claims on sunscreen labels, which will state how much time a user can expect to be protected while swimming or sweating.

“Prevention is critically important. It can single-handedly reduce the thousands of melanoma cases that arise each year and claim too many lives,” says Freeman. “Just one blistering sunburn increases the risk for melanoma, and no one should take that risk lightly.”

For more information on melanoma and preventive measures, visit www.melanoma.org, or contact at the MRF at (202) 347-9675.

### About Melanoma

Melanoma is one of the fastest growing cancers in the United States and can strike men and women of all ages, all races and skin types. With a one in 50 lifetime risk of developing melanoma, nearly 77,000 Americans are expected to be diagnosed with the disease in 2013, resulting in over 9,400 deaths. Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25- to 29-years-old and the second most common cancer in adolescents and young adults 15- to 29-years-old.

The majority of melanomas occur on the skin; in fact, melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. Melanoma can also occur in the eye (ocular, or uveal melanoma), in mucous membranes (mucosal melanoma), or even beneath fingernails or toenails.

### About the Melanoma Research Foundation

The Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) is the largest independent organization devoted to melanoma. Committed to the support of medical research in finding effective treatments and eventually a cure for melanoma, the MRF also educates patients and physicians about


prevention, diagnosis and the treatment of melanoma. The MRF is an active advocate for the melanoma community, helping to raise awareness of this disease and the need for a cure. The MRF’s website is the premier source for melanoma information seekers. More information is available at www.melanoma.org. Find the MRF on Facebook and Twitter.

About Freddie Freeman
Atlanta Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman is one of the youngest and most promising players in the major leagues. An offensive weapon and defensive stalwart, he twice was named National League Player of the Week in 2012 and led the NL in range factor at first base. Freddie’s 161 hits and 53 walks in 2011, his first full MLB season, set the high mark for rookies that year, and his .996 fielding percentage placed him in the top 10 among all MLB first basemen. In addition to becoming the first Braves rookie with over 20 home runs in more than 15 years, Freddie also was the first Braves rookie to get 50 RBIs by July 18 since the legendary Hank Aaron in 1954. He was selected by Atlanta in the 2007 MLB Draft out of El Modena High School in Fountain Valley, Calif. Prior to the majors, Freddie competed with Gwinnett (AAA), where he earned International League Rookie of the Year Honors and was rated by IL managers as the league’s best defensive first baseman.