

## **Lupus Assembly / Media Rally Kicks Off 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Georgia Lupus Awareness Day**

**Help us solve the cruel mystery of lupus!** Building awareness of lupus is essential to improve early diagnosis and treatment of this unpredictable and misunderstood disease, and ensure that people with lupus are aware of the support and resources available to help them manage the disease. One in three lupus patients is misdiagnosed. A lack of education and understanding leads to more than half of the people with lupus visiting three or more doctors and suffering four or more years before diagnosis with lupus.

The Georgia Chapter of the Lupus Foundation of America advocates on behalf of all people with lupus, their families and health professionals who care for them. The Chapter rallies all lupus stakeholders to educate government officials and policymakers the urgent need to expand investment in lupus research, education programs and support services. No one should face the suffering, uncertainty and frustration of lupus alone.

### **YOUR VOICE COUNTS! - Valuable Information for Meetings with YOUR Georgia Legislators**

We share some valuable information. You may only meet with a member of the legislature, or their staff, for possibly 15 minutes at the most. But your voice counts, **any** constituents, relaying to their elected officials, **that they have taken a half day or even an hour**, to share how important the effects of lupus are to them and their families, is a very powerful message.

#### **Some key points for your meetings!**

- **Be sure to urge your legislators to JOIN US on February 18<sup>th</sup> for the 12:00 pm Lupus Assembly (Media Rally) North Wing. BE SURE TO SHARE that YOU** are a constituent of the representative/senator AND YOU would like a photograph with your legislator; a photo opportunity will be an incentive for them to join us!
- **Why we are here - because lupus matters. Why does lupus matter to you - tell your personal story** and how lupus has affected you and your family.
- **Lupus affects over 55,000 Georgians and over 1.5 million Americans.** Lupus is a major health issue that has significant impact on our state's economy, **one in five** lupus patients are on disability. A recent American College of Rheumatology paper estimates lupus results in an average, annual medical costs per patient between **\$20,000 and \$60,000** and an estimated **\$31.4 billion** cost to the nation.
- The effects on many families can be devastating, chronic, life long and life threatening, yet despite its prevalence, lupus remains one of the least recognizable and most misunderstood diseases in both the medical and lay communities. Lupus affects primarily young women in their crucial childbearing years but also men, children and women of all ages and can result in immeasurable physical, financial and emotional toll on many families in our state.

#### **About The Lupus Foundation of America, Georgia Chapter**

The Lupus Foundation of America, Georgia Chapter continues to provide and expand the only valuable free educational programs, advocacy and awareness efforts including nine symposiums and seminars and over 30 support groups in communities across Georgia. The Chapter also supports the national research efforts funding and advocating for investment in lupus. Ninety percent of every dollar donated stays in Georgia and funds are raised from individuals, foundations, donors, corporate sponsors and events, including the nation's largest LFA walk. This year's 8th Annual Walk to End Lupus Now will be held at 1:00 pm Saturday, April 26th at Piedmont Park in Atlanta. For more information, visit [www.lupusga.org](http://www.lupusga.org).