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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

MINNESOTA-BASED LEADERS UNITE TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

Group Will Raise Funds and Provide Resources for Children's HeartLink

MINNEAPOLIS (September 12, 2011) – CEOs from many of the largest companies in the Twin Cities pledged their commitment to combat the most common major birth defect in children, congenital heart disease. The CEOs and their companies will support Children's HeartLink, headquartered in the Twin Cities, which links highly skilled pediatric cardiac care teams with underserved regions of the world to train and mentor local doctors, nurses and technicians and support development of sustainable programs to prevent, diagnose, and treat heart disease.

The CEOs are coming together to highlight the need for trained pediatric cardiac medical professionals around the world. One in every 120 children is born with a heart defect, and nearly 90 percent of newborns with congenital heart disease live in areas of the world where medical care is inadequate or unavailable. Without treatment, a child with congenital heart disease faces a high likelihood of early death.

Managing the most common major birth defect in the world is possible if emphasis is on a care and treatment model that works. A skilled pediatric cardiac team can treat congenital heart disease. Sometimes even one procedure can address the problem and restore a child's health, often for a lifetime.

Starting in September and throughout 2012, many CEOs, including Richard Davis of U.S. Bancorp, Ken Powell of General Mills, Douglas Baker of Ecolab and Greg Page of Cargill, will support various activities of Children's HeartLink such as sponsoring the HeartLink Gala, to be held on September 16, and advocating for pediatric cardiac training and sustainability efforts in developing countries.

"My colleagues and I recognize the need to help children is borderless. Our support of Children's HeartLink is our conduit to changing the course of congenital heart disease on a global basis," said Richard Davis of U.S. Bank. "Right now, the most effective way to combat this all-too-common disease in children is by building a coalition of highly skilled pediatric cardiac care professionals to train medical professionals and support sustainable programs in developing countries."

Children's HeartLink enjoys strong support from several Minnesota corporations and foundations, including the 2011 HeartLink Gala presenting sponsor, U.S. Bank, and platinum

sponsors Medtronic Foundation, Boston Scientific, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, St. Jude Medical, Inc., Holiday Companies, The Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation, and the Minnesota Vikings. (Additional sponsors are listed at www.childrensheartlink.org/gala.)

Children's HeartLink partners medical volunteers from world class pediatric cardiac programs, such as Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Stanford University's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital and University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital, with promising hospitals in developing countries, training their medical teams and supporting the development and improvement of pediatric cardiac care programs.

“Children's HeartLink is fortunate to have the support of so many globally minded individuals and their companies,” said Elizabeth Perlich Sweeney, Children's HeartLink president. “It has been well documented that there is an inequality of access to cardiac care for children in developing countries. The support we receive is essential for providing our model of care and matching resources to needs.”

Cardiovascular disease is one of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) getting global attention this month. The United Nations is holding a high-level meeting on NCDs September 19 to 20, 2011, in New York. The meeting will address the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases worldwide, as they account for 60 percent (35 million) of global deaths each year. The largest burden—80 percent (28 million)—occurs in low- to middle- income countries, making NCDs a major cause of poverty and an urgent development issue. Children's HeartLink, in partnership with the NCD Alliance, is raising awareness about the devastating effects of NCDs, including pediatric heart disease.

About Children's HeartLink

Founded in 1969, Children's HeartLink is a nonprofit organization partnering with health care centers in underserved regions of the world to promote sustainable cardiac care for children with congenital or acquired heart disease. Congenital heart disease is the world's most common major birth defect, affecting one in every 120 children. Nearly ninety percent of those newborns are in areas of the world where appropriate medical care is inadequate or unavailable. Children's HeartLink currently supports partner hospitals and programs in seven countries: Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Ukraine and Vietnam. To learn more click on: www.childrensheartlink.org.

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