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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Doug McConnell to Pursue "Triple Crown" of Open Water Swimming at the Manhattan Island Marathon Swim, Fundraises for ALS Research**

Skokie, IL – May 28, 2014 – On June 28, 2014, Doug McConnell, 56, of Barrington, Illinois, will swim 28.5 miles around Manhattan in the Manhattan Island Marathon Swim (MIMS). Completion of this swim will earn McConnell the "Triple Crown" of open water swimming, having previously completed swims across the English and Catalina Channels. Worldwide approximately 83 people have achieved the "Triple Crown," and of those, only 15 have completed these three marathon swims over the age of 50. Using endurance swimming as an opportunity to make a difference to the ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) community, McConnell and his team created "A Long Swim," a fundraising and awareness-building campaign in 2011, which has raised more than \$220,000 for scientific research programs at the Les Turner ALS Research Laboratories at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. In conjunction with the MIMS, McConnell will be fundraising again for the Les Turner ALS Foundation and also for Swim Free.

A lifelong swimmer, McConnell has completed numerous open water swims. In August of 2011, he became the 48<sup>th</sup> person over the age of 50 to swim across the grueling English Channel.

McConnell swam nearly 30 miles in 14 hours, battling heavy waves and enduring pitch black darkness. In September 2012, he swam The Catalina Channel, 22 miles of ocean that separates the Island of Catalina from Point Vicente in California.

McConnell's routine includes daily swims, logging a minimum of 35,000 yards (approximately 20 miles) per week, plus three hours of cross-training at the gym. As training intensifies, McConnell will increase the distance of his swims and train in open waters, such as Lake Michigan and Lake Zurich. The regimen is rigorous, especially when incorporated into a busy life of work, charity and family commitments.

“We are proud that ‘A Long Swim’ has become one of the most successful marathon swimming-oriented fundraisers in history,” said Doug McConnell. “Our past successes inspired me to pursue the ‘Triple Crown’ and continue to bring awareness and funding to ALS research.”

McConnell’s efforts are driven by the memory of his father David who passed away from ALS. David was diagnosed with ALS in 1994 after having lost strength in his arms nearly two years earlier. Unlike most people with ALS who live between two and five years after the onset of symptoms, David McConnell lived with the disease for 14 years.

“I saw firsthand how ALS affected my father and the struggles he faced with daily activities. Those struggles are profound and far more difficult than most people can imagine. Open water swimming, with its physical and mental demands, helps me put into perspective the challenges people with ALS go through every day.”

## **ALS**

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a terminal neuromuscular disease that attacks a person’s muscles, gradually robbing them of their ability to walk, speak, eat and breathe, yet usually keeping their mind intact. At any given time, approximately 35,000 people in the United States are living with ALS. While treatments and interventions can help alleviate some symptoms and prolong survival, there is currently no prevention or cure for ALS.

## **Les Turner ALS Foundation**

Since 1977, the Les Turner ALS Foundation has been a leader in research, patient care and education about Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and other motor neuron diseases (MND). The Foundation serves more than 90 percent of the ALS population in the Chicago area, providing a wide range of services, such as support group meetings and respite grants. The Foundation is affiliated with Northwestern Medicine where it supports two scientific research laboratories and a large multi-disciplinary clinical program.

## **Swim Free**

Swim Free is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the level of safety for participants and organizers of events in and around the water. Swim Free accomplishes its mission by providing safety certification programs for all types of event volunteers. In the past three years, Swim Free has raised over \$350,000 to promote the health improvement of children and adults through swim and get everybody in the water, safely and comfortably. The organization has made dozens of direct donations to learn-to-swim programs, community pools in underserved areas, environmental groups concerned with water quality, and other swimming programs. Swim Free also donated 1,200 swimsuits to NYC children who could not afford them.

Visit [www.ALongSwim.com](http://www.ALongSwim.com) for more information and follow “A Long Swim” on Facebook.

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