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Gluten-Free Resource Education Awareness Training Program Increases Accessibility and Availability of Gluten-Free Dining Options

Ambler, Pennsylvania (December 1st, 2008)- The National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) is launching its enhanced Gluten-Free Resource Education Awareness Training (GREAT) program, a comprehensive educational tool to educate health, food service, and hospitality industry professionals about celiac disease and the gluten-free diet.

The GREAT program addresses the entire spectrum of preparing and serving gluten-free foods. GREAT offers a systematic approach to using gluten-free ingredients and preventing cross-contamination that will allow kitchens to serve gluten-free diners. The GREAT program certifies kitchens and equips restaurants and other service establishments with the knowledge and training to create and develop gluten-free menus. After the completion of GREAT, kitchens will be able to advertise their gluten-free items as not only delicious but safe; recommended and supported by the NFCA.

Since its creation the GREAT program has certified establishments nationwide, over 131 restaurants and kitchens in 2008 alone; more than any other gluten-free cooking education and certification tool.

The multi-media GREAT program includes teaching manuals, online lessons, web-based examination, and tailored presentations materials used in house to educate all staff at every level. GREAT is a credentialed that provides continuing education credits for members of the American Culinary Federation and the American Dietetic Association.

Establishments who participate in the GREAT program will receive free advertising through the NFCA, on their website and in their online newsletter which is distributed to over 10,000 members of the gluten-free community. In addition, certified GREAT kitchens will be registered in the NFCA online database as a recommended establishment for gluten free dining.

“The GREAT program provides an invaluable resource to restaurants,” said Alice Bast, President of the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness. “Upon completion of the program, restaurants will see growth in business, customer loyalty and notoriety within the celiac community.”

3 million Americans suffer from celiac disease and an additional 10 million people live diagnosed with gluten-intolerance. The dietary needs of this exponentially growing community have driven the expansion and development of the gluten-free food market, which is expected to reach \$1.3 billion by 2010.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. It is triggered by consumption of the protein called gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye. Left untreated, people with celiac disease can develop further complications such as other autoimmune diseases, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and some cancers. The National Institute of Health estimates that 1 in 133 people in the United States have celiac

disease, but an astounding 95% live undiagnosed. The only known treatment for celiac disease is a life long adherence to a gluten- free diet.

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NFCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funding for celiac disease that will advance research, education and screening amongst medical professionals, children and adults. Visit www.celiaccentral.org or call 215-325-1306 for further information.