



For Immediate Release
February 12, 2009

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Pig Islet Cells Suitable for Human Transplantation

Diabetes Cure May Begin with Piglets

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Litters of second generation piglets may be the missing link for diabetes cure. The high-health ‘medical-grade’ pigs are capable of providing islet cells suitable for human transplantation. The pigs are healthy and thriving in the bio secure facility in Western Wisconsin operated by Spring Point Project.

Spring Point Project, a non-profit organization created to expedite the widespread availability of pig islet tissue (insulin-producing cells of the pancreas), partners with the Schulze Diabetes Institute of the University of Minnesota in providing the science and technology needed to transplant pig islet cells into human patients with diabetes.

Inside the DRWF Islet Resource Facility, a highly skilled team actively cares for the pigs, which are fed special food and given disinfected water to drink and filtered air to breathe. Currently the facility houses more than 100 pigs.

“Ongoing work will allow these pigs to provide a new way of life for people with diabetes and free them from this horrible disease. In coming years, we expect people with diabetes to be able to lead lives free of insulin injections.” says Tom Cartier, chairman of Spring Point Project.

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Pig Islet Cells-Page 2

Spring Point Project anticipates FDA approval allowing clinical trials with pig islet cells to commence within one year. “We are very pleased with the progress of our success in raising pigs for islet cell transplantation and are very optimistic that our partnership with the University of Minnesota will enable a ‘fix’ for diabetes patients to happen”, said Spring Point Project CEO Henk-Jan Schuurman, PhD. Schuurman, an experienced researcher in the field of xenotransplantation (the transplantation of living cells, tissues or organs from one species to another) has headed the project since its 2006 inception.

A recent donation by the Schulze Family Foundation of \$40 million dollars to the Diabetes Institute validated Spring Point Project’s early commitment to the combined vision and has accelerated the progress of the partnership.

Other groups working with xenotransplantation see Spring Point Project as a leader in this arena as well. Various organizations in the United States, Japan, China and Europe are approaching Spring Point Project about the process of generating ‘Medical-Grade’ pigs for transplantation.

Spring Point project is a non-profit organization which has raised more than \$13 million toward the goal of \$26 million necessary to get the organization through Phase I and Phase II of clinical trials.

About Spring Point Project

Spring Point Project, headquartered in Minneapolis, MN, is working to provide an unlimited source of pig islet cells to accelerate the availability and affordability of islet transplantation to cure diabetes. Spring Point Project and the Schulze Diabetes Institute of the University of Minnesota work in partnership to provide the source and science needed to move toward a cure for diabetes.

www.SpringPointProject.org

Schulze Diabetes Institute at the University of Minnesota -In 1994, the University of Minnesota Medical School capitalized upon its historic strengths in pancreas transplantation by establishing the Diabetes Institute for Immunology and Transplantation (DIIT) to pursue a cure for diabetes www.diabetesinstitute.org. The DIIT was renamed the Schulze Diabetes Institute in 2008.

The Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation (DRWF), a not-for-profit worldwide network based in Washington, DC, provided a \$6.2 million grant to Spring Point Project. In recognition the Islet Resource Facility was named after the DRWF. www.diabeteswellness.net

The Ryan Companies US, Inc., a leading national commercial real estate firm led by third-generation family members, is another major donor to Spring Point Project. Pat and Ann Ryan and Jim and Colleen Ryan have contributed \$3 million. Their donation included personal gifts and contributions through the company. In addition, the company built the facility in which Spring Point Project’s research is conducted. www.ryancompanies.com.

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