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Spring Point Project Welcomes Second Generation ‘Medical-Grade’ Piglets

*Award recognizes biotechnological advancements
on the path to cure diabetes with cells from pigs*

October 2008 – MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – A population of high-health ‘medical-grade’ pigs may be the missing link for the diabetes cure. By raising premier source pigs in a biosecure facility, [Spring Point Project](#), a non-profit organization created to expedite the widespread availability of islet tissue (insulin-producing cells of the pancreas), is taking an important step on the path to realize the cure for diabetes.

Spring Point Project is pleased to announce that recently several litters of second generation piglets have been born in the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation (DRWF) Islet Resource Facility, a biosecure animal facility in Western Wisconsin built and operated by Spring Point Project. The birth of these piglets signifies exciting advancements for the organization because these are the first pigs that can serve as donor of islet cells suitable for transplantation in diabetes patients.

In partnership with the Diabetes Institute for Immunology and Transplantation of the University of Minnesota, Spring Point Project works closely in providing the science and technology needed to move toward the cure for diabetes. First clinical trials are slated to start within a year and a half, and Spring Point Project will provide the donor animals of islets to be transplanted in patients with diabetes.

The organization’s progress is getting recognized. Spring Point Project is a finalist for the 2008 Tekne Biotechnology Award. Presented by the Minnesota High Tech Association in partnership with LifeScience Enterprise and Alley Minnesota, this award honors companies that excel in the field of agriculture, food, science and pharmaceuticals and is a celebration of superior technological innovation.

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“The Tekne Award recognition, in response to our innovative high-tech biotechnology efforts and achievements generating ‘medical grade’ pigs, is a monumental accomplishment for Spring Point Project and its staff,” says Spring Point Project CEO Henk-Jan Schuurman, PhD, who is an experienced researcher in the field of xenotransplantation – the transplantation of living cells, tissues or organs from one species to another.

“Spring Point Project’s expertise and commitment bring us in the forefront of technological advances. With unique science and technology, we will soon be able to provide a ‘fix’ for diabetes patients by using islet tissue from the ‘medical grade’ pigs in our facility.”

Other groups working in xenotransplantation see Spring Point Project more and more 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 for generating ‘clean’ pigs for transplantation in humans.

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 approximately 100 pigs.

“There are very few buildings of this kind in the world, and we are fortunate to have top-class people to manage our facility and care for the pigs,” says Tom Cartier, chairman of Spring Point Project. “Ongoing fundraising will allow these pigs to provide a new way of life for patients with diabetes and free them from this horrible disease. In coming years, we expect patients with diabetes to be able to lead lives free of insulin injections.”

As a nonprofit organization, Spring Point Project heavily depends on donations. The cost of breeding and maintaining these medical-grade pigs is roughly \$50 per day per pig. One program in fundraising is the [Sponsor a Pig Program](#), in which it is possible to sponsor a pig for various days in the facility.

To date approximately \$13 million has been raised toward the goal of \$26 million necessary to get the organization through the first clinical trials. Donations to Spring Point Project can be made at www.springpointproject.org/giving.

About Spring Point Project

Spring Point Project is a nonprofit organization with the mission 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 University of Minnesota work in partnership to provide the source and science needed to move toward a cure for diabetes.

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The Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation (DRWF), a not-for-profit worldwide network based in Washington, DC, has made a substantial contribution of \$6.2 million to Spring Point Project. In recognition of this significant donation, the Islet Resource Facility was named after the DRWF.

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. For more information about the Ryan Companies, visit www.ryancompanies.com.

The Minnesota High Tech Association (MHTA) accelerates the growth, sustainability and global competitiveness of Minnesota's technology-based economy through public-policy advocacy, member collaboration and education, and community outreach. MHTA is the only membership organization that represents Minnesota's entire technology-based economy. MHTA members include organizations of every size – involved in virtually every aspect of technology creation, production, application and education in Minnesota. MHTA works in partnership with AeA, which represents Minnesota's technology organizations nationally.

To contact Spring Point Project, visit www.SpringPointProject.org. To contact the Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation, visit www.diabeteswellness.net. To contact the Diabetes Institute for Immunology and Transplantation, visit www.diabetesinstitute.org. To contact the Minnesota High Tech Association, visit www.mhta.org.

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