

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Draft for Release**

## EXERCISE, SUPPORT KEY FACTORS IN OVERCOMING POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

### *Stroller Fitness Program Provides Both for Moms with the “Baby Blues”*

SAN DIEGO, CA (April XX, 2005) – Mother’s Day conjures up images of relaxed, contented moms gazing lovingly at their newborns and basking in their role as the family’s primary caretaker. But sometimes images can be deceiving. The darker side of motherhood is not often discussed, yet its effects can be staggering.

The “baby blues” – a short-lived period of mild depression postpartum – is extremely common among new moms, affecting up to 85% of new moms, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Alarming, one in ten of those women will experience the most severe form of the baby blues, postpartum depression (PPD).

Postpartum depression can surface anytime up to six months after childbirth, and if left untreated, can last up to a year or even longer. Common symptoms include loss of appetite, loss of energy and motivation, increased crying or tearfulness and feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, restlessness, irritability or anxiousness.

San Diego, CA mom Laura Russell (\*name has been changed) described her experience with PPD as “devastating.” Not only was she so depressed she could not function; she was then separated from her newborn son, thus compounding the feeling of worthlessness and isolation.

“I actually had to be institutionalized because the postpartum depression was so bad,” she said. “I have never experienced something that was so debilitating and so devastating in my life.”

After she was released, Russell was told by her doctor that in order to keep her depression under control, she could either use medication or seek out other coping skills such as therapy and exercise.

“ I joined a Stroller Strides exercise class, and looking back, I can honestly say, the classes saved me. The combination of regular exercise and the support I received from other new moms was something that no drug could give me. I lost weight and really began to feel better.”

Russell’s experience supports a commonly held belief that exercise is an effective prescription for depression. A recent study in *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, concluded that “better maternal well being” was found among mothers who maintained or increased their exercise both pre and postpartum when compared with mothers who had no or a decreased level of exercise (*Maternal and Child Health, September 2004, Volume 8, Number 3*). The article by JW Blum from the College of Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Southern Maine in Gorham, Maine, also cited support from partner/husband, family and friends as a significant factor in maintaining or increasing sports/exercise.

Numerous mental health professionals concur. “Research clearly proves that exercise has positive psychological effects, generating a more positive mood, relieving symptoms of stress and leading to an increased self esteem,” said Dr. Susan Levy, Professor of Sport and Exercise Psychology, Department of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at San Diego State University.

She applauded programs like Stroller Strides that combine exercise with a supportive group environment, adding that peer support is an effective way to encourage participants to continue exercising. “To gather new moms in a positive, supportive atmosphere can provide enormous incentive to begin exercising postpartum and also to adhere to an exercise program.”

Stroller Strides was founded in 2001, and is now offered in more than 150 locations across the United States, from Tampa, FL to Seattle, WA. The unique stroller fitness program offers a challenging class for moms who bring their babies and toddlers in strollers, utilizing power walking and exercise tubing. In addition to the classes, nationally certified Stroller Strides instructors organize playgroups and Moms’ Night Out, giving moms opportunities to socialize and further foster relationships.

For more information about Stroller Strides, and for classes nearest you, please visit [www.strollerstrides.com](http://www.strollerstrides.com). For an interview with Stroller Strides founder and fitness expert Lisa Druxman, contact Druxman at [lisa@strollerstrides.net](mailto:lisa@strollerstrides.net). Editors/reporters interested in trying a free Stroller Strides class, or for more information or images, contact Lynne Latronica, On the Horizon Communications, [lynne@thepressroom.com](mailto:lynne@thepressroom.com) (805) 773-1000.