The GBT Foundation Awards $250,000 in ACE Grants to Support Sickle Cell Disease Community-Based Organizations

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., July 12, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The GBT Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization primarily funded by Global Blood Therapeutics, Inc. (GBT), has awarded grants of approximately $50,000 each to five community-based organizations (CBOs) as recipients of the inaugural Access to Care Empowerment for Sickle Cell (ACE) Grant Program. Through the ACE Grant Program, The GBT Foundation plans to fund up to $250,000 per year to support initiatives dedicated to advancing health equity and enhancing education, empowerment, and access to care for people living with sickle cell disease (SCD).

"CBOs can play an important role as local resources for sickle cell disease patients and caregivers as they navigate their healthcare journey. The GBT Foundation is proud to provide much-needed support to these organizations through the ACE Grant Program, strengthening the potential to create meaningful and sustainable change," said Jung E. Choi, board member of The GBT Foundation and chief business and strategy officer and head of patient advocacy and government affairs at GBT. "Helping families and caregivers to better support sickle cell warriors and enhance education initiatives for young adults with SCD are important steps to connect them with the high-quality health services they deserve."

Established in 2021, The GBT Foundation is a community-focused, charitable entity that is committed to improving health equity worldwide, particularly for people living with SCD. The 2022 ACE Grant recipients are:

- **Advancing Sickle Cell Advocacy Project, Inc. (Miami, Florida) – Project COPE** to help children and families navigate their SCD journey by providing peer support, education, mindfulness training, and effective stress-coping techniques.

- **Children's Sickle Cell Foundation, Inc. (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) – Living Well with Sickle Cell Family Leadership Program** to educate sickle cell family leaders about SCD, care, treatment, and their role in advocacy.

- **Maryland Sickle Cell Disease Association (Baltimore, Maryland) – Effective Access to Adult Sickle Cell Experts (EAASE)** project to facilitate the hiring of a Transition Navigator to create a personal and curated experience for pediatric patients to transition to adult healthcare providers.

- **Sickle Cell Association of South Louisiana (Lafayette, Louisiana) – KNEAUX Sickle Program** to support resources for teens transitioning from pediatric to adult SCD healthcare providers.

- **Sickle Cell Warriors, Inc. (San Diego, California) – Sickle Cell Warriors Advocacy Training & Empowerment Program (WATEP)** to educate warriors and caregivers to advocate for themselves and others living with SCD by expanding healthcare literacy.

ACE Grant Program recipients were selected by a panel of external and internal experts. Criteria for selection included the programs' potential impact on SCD patient care, evaluation and sustainability plans, organizational capabilities, and alignment with mission of The GBT Foundation.

The ACE Grant Program builds on the Access to Excellent Care for Sickle Cell Patients (ACCEL) Grant Program, which is in its fourth year and is accepting applications through July 29, 2022. The ACCEL Grant Program plans to provide up to $500,000 this year to U.S.-based nonprofit healthcare organizations or institutions that serve patients with SCD and their families and seek to improve their access to high-quality healthcare. Since 2019, the ACE and ACCEL programs have granted a total of nearly $1.25 million to 24 organizations to accelerate the development of sustainable and innovative programs for SCD patients.

About Sickle Cell Disease

It is estimated that more than 100,000 people in the United States,[1] 52,000 people in Europe,[2] up to 100,000 people in Brazil,[3] and millions of people throughout the world have sickle cell disease (SCD).[1] SCD occurs particularly among those whose ancestors are from sub-Saharan Africa, though it also occurs in people of Hispanic, South Asian, Southern European and Middle Eastern ancestry.[1] SCD is a lifelong inherited blood disorder that impacts hemoglobin, a protein carried by red blood cells that delivers oxygen to tissues and organs throughout the body.[4] Due to a genetic mutation, individuals with SCD form abnormal hemoglobin known as sickle hemoglobin. When sickle hemoglobin becomes deoxygenated, it polymerizes to form rods, which deforms the red blood cells into sickled – crescent-shaped, rigid – cells.[4,5,6] The recurrent sickling process causes destruction of the red blood cells, hemolysis and anemia (low hemoglobin due to red blood cell destruction), which drives vascular inflammation contributing to blockages in capillaries and small blood vessels (vaso-occlusion) that impede the flow of blood and oxygen delivery throughout the body. Episodes of painful vascular occlusions are commonly referred to as vaso-occlusive crises (VOCs). The diminished oxygen delivery to tissues and organs can lead to life-threatening complications, including stroke and irreversible organ damage.[5,6,7,8,9] Complications of SCD begin in early childhood and can include neurocognitive impairment, acute chest syndrome, and silent and overt stroke, among other serious issues.[10] Early intervention and treatment of SCD have shown potential to modify the course of this disease, reduce symptoms and events, prevent long-term organ damage, and extend life expectancy.[5]

About The GBT Foundation

Founded in 2021, The GBT Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, primarily funded

by Global Blood Therapeutics, Inc. (GBT). Building on GBT's corporate giving commitment, The GBT Foundation is a community-focused, charitable entity that is committed to improving health equity worldwide, particularly for people living with SCD. The GBT Foundation is a separate legal entity from GBT. To learn more, please visit www.gbt.com/gbtfoundation.

About Global Blood Therapeutics

Global Blood Therapeutics (GBT) is a biopharmaceutical company dedicated to the discovery, development and delivery of life-changing treatments that provide hope to underserved patient communities, starting with sickle cell disease (SCD). Founded in 2011, GBT is delivering on its goal to transform the treatment and care of SCD, a lifelong, devastating inherited blood disorder. The company has introduced the first FDA-approved medicine that directly inhibits sickle hemoglobin (HbS) polymerization, the root cause of red blood cell sickling in SCD. GBT is also advancing its pipeline program to address significant patient needs in SCD. To learn more, please visit www.gbt.com and follow the company on Twitter @GBT_news.

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Contact:

Steven Immergut (media)
+1 650-410-3258
simmergut@gbt.com