



NEWS RELEASE

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**Poignant New Book “Ya Can’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Day – The James Emails”  
Tells Of A Little Boy Who Lived Like There Was No Tomorrow**

*With foreword by actor Tom Hanks*

**June 20, 2005 – TORONTO:** Syd Birrell didn’t have to imagine every father’s worst nightmare. He lived it. Soon after the moment his then 3-year-old son James was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, one of the most deadly forms of childhood cancer, Syd and his family made an extraordinary decision: they would savour each day as a family and, in the short time that they had left with James, try to realize as many dreams as they possibly could. From those that were easy to fulfil (dinner at the top of the CN Tower) to those that were outrageous (a seven year old driving a freight train pulling 100 cars), the result was an all too short life lived to the fullest and an inspirational book called **“Ya Can’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Day – The James Emails”** that launched today at the MDS Nordion Booth (#1113) at the **Society of Nuclear Medicine Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada.**

With a foreword by Tom Hanks, Honorary Patron of the James Fund and star of James’ favourite film, *Apollo 13*, **“Ya Can’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Day”** is the collection of journals Syd wrote and shared via email throughout James’ five-year battle with the disease that killed him. At first distributed to only a handful of family members, the James Emails soon touched the hearts of people from all over the world who were drawn to James’ story.

“With literally thousands of people urging me to write this book, our family agreed that it was important to capture this amazing journey for others to share,” **said Syd Birrell.** “This book not only honours James’ legacy, but provides an intimate look at discoveries, faith and the true goodness that can come from tragedy.”

The book was launched in partnership with MDS Nordion. MDS Nordion played a small role in James' treatment during his battle with the disease supplying the medical isotope, iodine-123, for <sup>123</sup>I MIBG, a drug used to diagnose and monitor the disease. However, through circumstances as told in the book, the company developed a lasting relationship with the Birrell family. In celebration of the launch, MDS Nordion has donated \$10,000 to The James Birrell Fund for Neuroblastoma Research and purchased 1500 copies of the initial run of the book.

“Rarely do we have the opportunity to come to know so personally, the people that are directly affected by our work. This story reminds all of us, at MDS Nordion, why we do what we do,” **said Iain Trevena, Senior Vice President Nuclear Medicine at MDS Nordion.**

“Ya Can’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Day” can be purchased online at [www.greentrainbooks.com](http://www.greentrainbooks.com) - cost: \$19.93 Cdn (plus GST). Partial proceeds go toward The James Fund.

### **Background on Tom Hanks involvement with James**

Mr. Hanks contacted James by phone after learning of James’ fascination with the Apollo 13 story and a friendship began. Shortly after James’ death, he wrote about the impact of his connection to James.

“James Birrell was a good kid,” **Tom Hanks wrote the family.** “James was a cheerful voice on the phone and a diligent pen pal who was a big fan of space ships and railroad trains. When neuroblastoma took James away, that word was new and ugly.”

### **About the James Birrell Fund for Neuroblastoma Research**

The James Fund (JF) was established at Sick Kids Foundation by the family of James Birrell to generate knowledge to lead to new therapies for the treatment of patients with neuroblastoma. It has rapidly grown to be Canada’s leading neuroblastoma research initiative and actor Tom Hanks is its Honorary Patron. To date, eight research projects have been funded, six papers published, a drug-testing unit has been established and several international collaborations are underway bringing new hope to the parents of children suffering from this terrible childhood cancer.

### **About MDS Nordion**

MDS Nordion ([www.mds.nordion.com](http://www.mds.nordion.com)) is a world leader in radioisotopes, radiation and related technologies. MDS Nordion is part of MDS Inc. (TSX:MDS; NYSE:MDZ). MDS Inc. has more than 9,000 highly skilled people in 27 countries. We provide a diverse range of superior products and services to increase our customers’ speed, precision and productivity in the drug development and disease diagnosis processes. We are a global, values-driven health and life sciences company, recognized for our reliability and collaborative relationships as we help create better outcomes in the treatment of disease. Our mission is to make a distinctive contribution to the health and well being of people. Find out more at [www.mdsintl.com](http://www.mdsintl.com) or by calling 1-888-MDS-7222, 24 hours a day.

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