

For information contact: Stephanie Miller, 678-591-8331  
smiller@hopeandlight.org

For Immediate Release

### **Local triathlete racing in Ironman Wisconsin to raise awareness for the Hope and Light Foundation**

**(Atlanta, August 23, 2007)** When Atlanta resident and triathlete, Lisa Witzlib steps up to the starting line at the Ironman Wisconsin in September she won't be competing just for herself. She'll also be raising awareness for The Hope and Light Foundation which benefits children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), the leading genetic killer of babies and children under the age of two.

As part of National SMA Awareness month, Witzlib is putting some muscle into the fight against this deadly disease during the month of August. Witzlib, Director of Group Fitness at Adrenaline Wellness and Fitness in Chamblee, GA, is putting out a call to the Atlanta community to support her efforts as she races in honor of The Hope and Light Foundation.

"When I heard about the foundation's mission to raise awareness and funds to cure SMA I knew I needed to help. I am blessed to be able to compete in an Ironman and hope others will be motivated to give, said Witzlib."

Witzlib heard about SMA from her friend Stephanie Miller, President of the Hope and Light. Miller is also mother to three and half year old Aleena, who suffers from SMA Type I. Aleena has battled the disease since she was diagnosed at only three months old.

"Scientists are close to finding an effective treatment and even a cure for SMA, but that cannot happen without widespread support. Lisa's incredible commitment is a true testament to the strength one person can contribute to our mission" said Hope and Light President, Stephanie Miller.

Witzlib has spent countless hours preparing for the competition with 6 training days in 100 degree weather, 2 yellow jacket stings while riding her bike and over 106,000 yards swam. What has kept her mind, body and spirit strong during months of intense training and, ultimately, during the race is the reminder of why she is competing.

"Babies battling this disease are in the race of a lifetime. The real victory will come when a cure is found. Until then, racing 140.6 miles in honor of these children is the least I can do to help."

To make a donation, go to [www.hopeandlight.org](http://www.hopeandlight.org)

About SMA: Spinal muscular atrophy is a genetic motor neuron disease caused by the progressive degeneration of nerve cells in the spinal cord and brainstem. SMA rapidly destroys a child's muscle control and strength, leading to the progressive inability to walk, stand, sit up, eat, and ultimately, breathe. Over 50 percent of patients with SMA die before the age of two. There are three types of SMA. Type I is the most severe and most children afflicted with this form of the disease do not reach their first birthday.

About The Hope and Light Foundation: The Hope and Light Foundation is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 2004 dedicated to finding a cure for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). For more information about The Hope and Light Foundation, visit [www.hopeandlight.org](http://www.hopeandlight.org)

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