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Month-Long Fundraising Effort Replaces the 36th Annual Chocolate Ball

Presented by UR Medicine Epilepsy Center, Golisano Children's Hospital, and Neurology.

Rochester, NY – January 19, 2022. Empowering People's Independence (EPI) has decided to cancel the 36th Annual Chocolate Ball originally scheduled for Saturday, February 5, 2022, at the Hyatt Regency Rochester.

“Due to the incredibly contagious nature of Omicron, and uncertainty about where things will stand in a few weeks, we decided that we could not host a safe event,” says EPI CEO Jeff Sinnebox. “We are incredibly disappointed, but as a health and human services agency, the safety and welfare of people must come first.”

The annual gala was set to return after a television broadcast replaced the 2021 event because of COVID restrictions on social gatherings. The ball, EPI's largest annual fundraising event, provides funds to support EPI's epilepsy services such as support groups, respite programs, Teen Weekends, education, and Camp EAGR, the only week-long camp in New York State for children with epilepsy.

In lieu of an event, EPI has launched a month-long campaign to raise the \$100,000 needed to fund 2022 epilepsy programs that support more than 7,000 children and adults in Central and Western New York.

“People depend daily upon on these services,” says Education Coordinator & Camp Director Mike Radell. “A shortfall in funds means we simply can't make those programs available which will significantly impact the people we support, their families and other caregivers.”

Just in time for Valentine's Day, people can visit EPIChocolateBall.com to purchase \$50 Chocolate Ball to Go packages that include a Lotus Bowl from Encore Chocolates and a demi-bottle of champagne. Sales will close at midnight on February 11 and EPI offices will be open on February 11 and 12 for pickup of purchased packages.

“We had a bit of a ‘Now what?’ moment and looked around for ideas,” explains Sinnebox. “It turns out we didn't have to look too far. We were inspired by the thousands of people we support, who face uncertainty on

a daily basis and find ways to be resilient in the face of adversity. Our plans have changed but our goal to fund these programs has not.”

EPI is a founding member of the Epilepsy Alliance America, a new nation-wide network of human service agencies dedicated to providing local support to people affected by epilepsy.

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EPI provides progressive, tailored care solutions to people with developmental disabilities, epilepsy, and brain injury. Headquartered in Rochester, NY and with offices in Syracuse and Binghamton, EPI provides comprehensive services in the Finger Lakes, Southern Tier, Western and Central New York regions. EPI's offerings include Self-Direction, Day and Community Habilitation, residential services, respite, and Health Homes. Learn more about EPI at epiny.org.