



OPHA Mourns the loss of Public Health Champion, Dr. Sheela Basrur

(Toronto, June 3, 2008) The Ontario Public Health Association is saddened by the loss of Dr. Sheela Basrur. She was a strong advocate for Public health, an honorary member of OPHA and a dear friend.

Dr. Basrur's exemplary leadership which garnered international attention throughout Toronto's SARS episode in 2003, was evident throughout her career in public health. She made positive and indelible impressions on both the people and the issues she encountered.

"She inspired and reassured everyone around her with her calm confidence. She valued all with whom she worked and led with integrity and imagination," said Carol Timmings, OPHA President, fondly recalling her friendship with Dr. Basrur and the wide range of public health issues on which they collaborated. "She will be remembered for her many positive attributes including her communication skills, her charming sense of humor and her dedication to the principle and practice of equity."

Dr. Basrur, although well-known for her work in infectious diseases, championed a wide range of issues throughout her career including tobacco control, banning cosmetic pesticide use and the encouragement of healthier lifestyles through physical activity and nutrition. She was also instrumental in proposing Ontario's first arms-length public health agency which was launched this spring as the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion.

"The greatest tribute we can make to the memory of Dr. Basrur is to continue our advocacy for the transformation she envisioned to strengthen Public Health in Ontario and across the country," said Carol Timmings. "OPHA will honour Dr. Basrur's memory by intensifying our efforts to implement her vision with her characteristic courage and commitment to public health excellence."

Dr. Basrur's contributions to OPHA and to public health in Ontario will be commemorated annually through the OPHA's Dr. Sheela Basrur Scholarship awarded annually to an OPHA-affiliated public health professional pursuing university-level studies in public health. Dr. Basrur presented the inaugural award in November 2007.

Founded in 1949, OPHA's mission is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.