

PRESS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lonnie Marcum

## San Luis Obispo County Declares May Lyme Disease Awareness Month

Two local moms with children affected by the illness urge parents to take precautions.

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA, April 13, 2017: On May 2, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, will present two local mothers, Lonnie Marcum and Nicki Nysven, with a proclamation naming May as “Lyme Disease Awareness Month.”

Lyme disease occurs world-wide and is currently a “hidden epidemic” in California, according to Phyllis Mervine, President of [LymeDisease.org](http://LymeDisease.org), a national advocacy organization. In California, Lyme disease-carrying ticks have been documented in 56 out of 58 counties. Yet many doctors are unfamiliar with tick-borne disease and reluctant to diagnose it.

Marcum’s daughter saw 20 doctors before finally being diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2013.

Before that, Marcum said, her daughter presented with what she now knows can be typical symptoms of Lyme disease: excruciating headaches, joint swelling, heart rhythm irregularities, memory loss, bone pain, and crushing fatigue.

She says doctors told her, “We don’t have Lyme disease in California.”

When Lyme disease is diagnosed promptly and treated properly, many people recover quickly. However, half of respondents to a survey by [LymeDisease.org](http://LymeDisease.org) had their diagnosis delayed up to four years because their doctors did not understand how to interpret the tests.

In fact, it took over five years before Nicki Nysven’s daughter was finally diagnosed with Lyme disease. Nysven said, “It all started when my daughter, then four-and-a-half, told me her back and neck hurt and she felt tingly feelings like lady bugs were crawling on her arms and legs.” Hundreds of doctor appointments, blood tests, MRIs, CAT-scans, and a team of specialists at a major children’s hospital could not determine the cause of her illness.

Since Marcum and Nysven discovered their children have Lyme, they have actively worked to spread awareness of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases in California. Ticks can carry multiple infectious diseases including Anaplasma, Babesia, Ehrlichia, Rickettsia, and Tularemia.

They want parents to know that they might not see a tick or a rash on their kids, and early symptoms of Lyme disease can seem like the flu.

“But you don’t typically get flu in the summer,” Marcum cautioned. “In hindsight, that should have been our first clue.”

Lyme disease is transmitted to people through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. While these ticks are most active during May through July, there is risk in this area year-round.

To prevent Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases they recommend:

- Avoid areas with high grass and leaf litter and walk in the center of trails when hiking. Do not sit on rocks or logs where ticks are often found.
- Use repellent on exposed skin for protection that lasts several hours. Always follow product instructions.
- Use products that contain permethrin to treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents or look for clothing pre-treated with permethrin.
- Throw exposed clothing into a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes before washing—high heat kills ticks.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors to wash off and more easily find crawling ticks before they bite you. Also, run your soapy hands all over your body, feeling for bumps that might be embedded ticks.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon returning from tick-infested areas.
- Parents should help children check for ticks. Remove any ticks right away.
- Save the tick in a small vial or plastic bag for testing.

For more information, consult the website [www.lymedisease.org](http://www.lymedisease.org)

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