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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THINKFIRST CANADA!....before using off-road vehicles**

Wednesday May 26, 2010, Toronto, ON – All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are powerful machines that require strength and skill to operate. So it makes sense to start teaching kids to ride early, right? "No! - The truth is that ATVs cause more permanent disabilities and death than most other sport or recreational activities," says Dr. Charles Tator, brain surgeon, researcher and founder of ThinkFirst Canada. "Children and youth lack the knowledge, development and skills to safely operate these vehicles. ATV use by children has resulted in serious injury and death"

In 2000/2001 severe injuries related to ATV use accounted for 13 per cent of all severe injuries sustained through sports and recreational activities, making ATV related injuries the third most common cause of severe injuries in sports and recreation in Canada. ThinkFirst's Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation funded research project found that there were 16 ATV related deaths in Ontario alone in both 2004 and 2005, and that the majority of these were due to brain or spinal injuries. In addition to vehicle size and rider age, alcohol and lack of equipment are documented factors in ATV injuries.

ThinkFirst Canada and its valued partners in injury prevention recommend that children under the age of 16 refrain from operating any type of ATV and, recommend requiring mandatory use of appropriate helmets and safety training for all those riding ATVs regardless of age.

The rise in popularity of ATVs has been accompanied by a rise in catastrophic injury. ATVs can travel up to speeds of 105 km/h and can weigh up to 227kg, approximately 500lbs. "Like cars, ATVs are motorized vehicles that require adult skills and judgment to operate safely," warns Rebecca Nesdale, executive director of ThinkFirst Canada, "ThinkFirst Canada recognizes that while ATVs pose a degree of risk to all riders, the risks are greater for children and youth."

For ThinkFirst Canada's top tips on reducing your chances of sustaining a catastrophic injury while operating an ATV please visit <http://thinkfirst.ca/safetyinfo.aspx>.

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*ThinkFirst Canada is a national, charitable organization dedicated to preventing brain and spinal cord injury. Founded in 1992 by renowned neurosurgeon, Dr. Charles Tator, ThinkFirst Canada continues to be an injury prevention leader encouraging children and youth and those who care*

*about them to be active and safe. ThinkFirst advocates for proven injury prevention strategies including helmet use. At the heart of ThinkFirst Canada are 19 Chapters that stretch across the country. ThinkFirst's injury prevention message is promoted through TD ThinkFirst for Kids, sport programs, schools, community presentations, concussion education and with the help of VIPs (Voices for Injury Prevention), a dedicated group of injury survivors who share the message that prevention is the only cure.*

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