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Media Release

Seven times a survivor

Seven-time cancer survivor Phil Kerlake has been appointed an international *Hero of Hope* at a global Relay For Life summit, hosted by the American Cancer Society. As part of this role, Mr Kerlake will also serve as the Cancer Society of New Zealand's Relay For Life Ambassador.

Mr Kerlake is the author of the best-selling book *Life, Happiness...and Cancer*. He has been a Cancer Society volunteer for over twenty years and is the first New Zealander to be recognised with this honour.

"The 'Heroes' are a select group of cancer survivors and carers from across the world," said Dalton Kelly, Chief Executive of the Cancer Society. "They are acknowledged and recognised for their outstanding contribution to cancer survivorship in their home country. The Society is incredibly lucky to have Phil on board and we are proud and gratified his contribution has been recognised with such an honour."

Mr Kerlake regularly meets with cancer survivors and carers, as well as Society volunteers and staff from around the country. He was 'blown away,' by the appointment.

"I am truly honoured and humbled to receive this appointment. Through it I hope to encourage more survivors, and others, to become involved in Relay in their areas. We want more people involved in the life-affirming experience that is Relay For Life. This will enable us to inform people about the huge benefits of becoming involved in the Cancer Society's information, education and support measures after a diagnosis. From personal experience, this can be a life-preserving step in the cancer journey."

One of Mr Kerlake's first visits after his return from the USA was to the Hon Tony Ryall, Minister of Health, to discuss his role and his aspirations for it. "Mr Ryall was acutely aware of the potential economic and social benefits of cancer patients travelling better with the supportive care on offer from the Cancer Society," said Mr Kerlake. "I was delighted with the sincere interest he took in the cause when we met with him."



Phil Kerlake, who has been appointed as the Cancer Society of New Zealand's Relay For Life Ambassador for 2011/12 with the Hon Tony Ryall, and the Chief Executive of the Cancer Society, Dalton Kelly (left).

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