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Opus Genetics Announces Two Key Leadership Appointments

- *Dr. Ash Jayagopal named Chief Scientific Officer*
- *Mr. Joe Schachle appointed Chief Operating Officer*

RALEIGH, N.C., Oct. 20, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Opus Genetics, a patient-focused gene therapy company developing treatments for orphan inherited retinal diseases, today announced two key appointments to its founding executive team. Ash Jayagopal, Ph.D., has joined the company as Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) and Joe Schachle has joined as Chief Operating Officer (COO).

"We were thrilled to launch Opus last month to advance an AAV-based gene therapy portfolio to treat neglected, orphan inherited retinal diseases, and we welcome Ash and Joe's leadership at this important and foundational time for the Company," said Ben Yerxa, Ph.D., CEO of the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the Retinal Degeneration Fund, and acting CEO of Opus. "Ash's career discovering and developing therapies for ocular diseases makes him well-suited for the role of Opus CSO, where he will be instrumental in the advancement of our initial programs OPGx-001 and OPGx-002 for Leber congenital amaurosis. Additionally, Joe brings deep operational experience to his role as COO, specifically his expertise in strategic planning, business development and operations, which will be invaluable as we build our company and create novel orphan manufacturing scale and efficiencies."

Dr. Jayagopal has more than 13 years of experience in drug development, drug delivery platforms and biomarker development for retinal diseases. Prior to joining Opus, Dr. Jayagopal served as the executive director of discovery medicine at Kodiak Sciences, where he led the drug discovery team and shaped the strategy for leveraging Kodiak's biopolymer technology for delivery of large and small molecules in retinal diseases. Previously, Dr. Jayagopal was head of molecular pharmacology and biomarkers in ophthalmology at Roche, where he built and led a team of more than 25 scientists focused on the discovery and validation of biologics, small molecules, and gene therapies for ocular diseases, including inherited retinal diseases. Dr. Jayagopal has also served as an assistant professor in the departments of ophthalmology and visual sciences at the Vanderbilt Eye Institute, and the departments of molecular physiology and biophysics of Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"Opus was formed to bring an unprecedented combination of resources, elite science and the expertise of pioneers in ocular gene therapy to bear and drive transformative treatments to patients," said Dr. Jayagopal. "With its advanced pipeline – unique for a company at this stage – Opus has the potential to be clinical-stage in the near-term, and I look forward to working with the team to break new scientific ground in the pursuit of better treatments for

inherited retinal diseases.”

Mr. Schachle brings more than 30 years of experience in life sciences to Opus, with specific expertise in strategic and operational planning, business development, marketing and sales, and business intelligence. Before joining Opus, Mr. Schachle served as vice president of Customer Experience Enablement and vice president of global commercial services and controlling at Grifols, where he led multiple commercial departments across business units, managed key cross-divisional initiatives and directed strategic brand planning process. Previously, Mr. Schachle was the COO for Parion Sciences, and part of the team that secured partners for the company’s lead programs, which exceeded \$1 billion in deal value. Mr. Schachle has also served as chief commercial officer for Inspire Pharmaceuticals, where he oversaw multiple partnering deals and promoted three eye care brands, including Restasis®. In addition, he’s held multiple sales and marketing leadership positions at GlaxoSmithKline, where he managed several billion-dollar brands including Advair®, Imitrex®, Wellbutrin SR®, Epivir® / Retrovir® and Combivir®.

“Opus is built by and for patients to efficiently move validated science toward patients leveraging scalable, strategic manufacturing and processes,” said Mr. Schachle. “I look forward to leading the work to operationalize this first-of-its-kind model to address significant unmet need in the treatment of neglected, orphan inherited retinal diseases.”

Dr. Jayagopal holds a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from Vanderbilt University and an MBA from the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Mr. Schachle holds a B.A. in business administration from James Madison University and an MBA from Old Dominion University.

About Opus Genetics

Opus Genetics is a groundbreaking gene therapy company for inherited retinal diseases with a unique model and purpose. Backed by Foundation Fighting Blindness’s venture arm, the RD Fund, Opus combines unparalleled insight and commitment to patient need with wholly owned programs in numerous orphan retinal diseases. Its AAV-based gene therapy portfolio tackles some of the most neglected forms of inherited blindness while creating novel orphan manufacturing scale and efficiencies. Based in Raleigh, N.C., the company leverages knowledge of the best science and the expertise of pioneers in ocular gene therapy to transparently drive transformative treatments to patients. For more information, visit www.opusgenetics.com.

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