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RICARDO ANTONIO CHAVIRA USES CELEBRITY TO SUPPORT BREAST CANCER CAREGIVERS

Desperate Housewives' Star Joins The Wellness Community as National Spokesperson for the C.A.R.E. Campaign for Breast Cancer Caregivers

PHILADELPHIA—Ricardo Antonio Chavira, star of ABC's hit TV show *Desperate Housewives*, found himself in a role he hoped never to play again – breast cancer caregiver. The diagnosis of his two sisters in late 2008 left Chavira shocked and overwhelmed with old memories of the challenges he experienced as a caregiver to his mother.

"I have experienced firsthand the tremendous impact breast cancer has on the women who fight it and the loved ones who support them," said Chavira. "This is a disease that catches you unaware and, without the right resources, leaves you feeling frightened and alone."

Chavira's personal connection as a cancer caregiver has led him to partner with The Wellness Community (TWC) to launch a new, innovative campaign to help educate people about the needs of cancer caregivers and provide much needed support. Made possible by a grant from The Breast Cancer Fund of National Philanthropic Trust, the *C.A.R.E. (Cancer Advocate Resources and Education) Campaign* for breast cancer caregivers provides free resources, tips and support for those caring for a loved one with breast cancer.

"There is a great need to address the well-being of cancer caregivers," said Kim Thiboldeaux, president and CEO of TWC. "While the cancer community has done a remarkable job identifying and supporting the needs of people with cancer, a significant gap exists in supporting and providing information for caregivers."

The campaign features four core components. A comprehensive educational publication, *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: When a Woman You Care About Has Breast Cancer*, provides personal stories, checklists and practical advice for caregivers to help them address both their own needs and those of their loved ones. The national *CAREing and COPEing* workshop series, which aims at helping caregivers and patients better communicate and problem solve as a team, will be hosted at Wellness Communities across the country. To help educate the public about the role of cancer caregivers and the resources available to them, a public service announcement, featuring Ricardo Antonio Chavira, will air across the United States. Finally, the campaign provides Web-based resources specifically for those who care about someone with breast cancer.

“With more than 12 million cancer survivors in the United States and an estimated 1.5 million new cases in 2009, the demand for care that addresses quality of life issues continues to grow,” said Thiboldeaux. “The 2007 Institute of Medicine’s report, ‘Cancer Care for the Whole Patient’ sets a clear mandate for community-based support as an essential element of quality health care for cancer patients and their families and recognized The Wellness Community as a leader in these efforts.”

Of the estimated 1.5 million people in the United States that will be diagnosed with cancer, nearly 200,000 women will be told they have breast cancer. For most of these women, someone who cares about them will take on the role of caregiver. These caregivers provide an invaluable service to those with cancer, offering support on many different levels. This includes making meals, going to doctor appointments, picking up prescriptions or helping their loved one cope with the emotions of a cancer diagnosis and treatment. While they devote a substantial amount of time and energy to their loved ones, they often do not take the time to focus on their own needs leading to significant distress that is often unrecognized and unreported. There is a great need to address the well-being of cancer caregivers and arm them with strategies and skills that enhance their ability to provide supportive care to their loved ones while avoiding burnout.

“This is the first initiative that really focuses on the needs of the cancer caregiver,” said Chavira. “I am honored to work with The Wellness Community on this important project. Having experienced caregiving without these critical resources, I know how valuable they will be to the millions of current and future breast cancer caregivers.”

To learn more about the *C.A.R.E. Campaign* and cancer caregiving, or to access these resources, visit www.thewellnesscommunity.org.

About the C.A.R.E. Campaign

The *C.A.R.E. (Cancer Advocate Resources and Education) Campaign* for breast cancer caregivers provides free resources, tips and support for those caring for a loved one with breast cancer. Developed by The Wellness Community, with support from The Breast Cancer Fund of National Philanthropic Trust, the *C.A.R.E. Campaign’s* resources include the educational publication, *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: When A Woman You Care About Has Breast Cancer*, the *CAREing & COPEing* workshops, as well as Web-based resources specifically for those who care about someone with breast cancer.

About The Wellness Community and Gilda’s Club

In July 2009, The Wellness Community and Gilda’s Club joined forces to become the largest provider of cancer support worldwide. The combined organization is comprised of nearly 50 local affiliates, 12 affiliates in development and over 100 satellite locations. Together, we will continue to provide support, education and hope to all people affected by cancer. By offering professionally-led support groups, educational workshops, nutrition and exercise programs, and stress-reduction classes, The Wellness Community and Gilda’s Club continue to empower and educate individuals affected by cancer. For more information, visit www.thewellnesscommunity.org.

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