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Emmy Winning Actress Leads Charge to Pair People Battling Depression With Partners

- Multimedia Program Aims to End the Loneliness of Depression and Inspire Hope for Recovery -

INDIANAPOLIS, March 15, 2005 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Emmy-award winning actress Linda Dano steps into the spotlight today to reveal her personal struggle with depression and announce she will spearhead Support Partners, a national campaign that encourages a support team approach to overcoming depression. By pairing people living with depression with partners, the program aims to foster open communication and create systems of support that eliminate isolation and encourage recovery.

"Depression can cause feelings of isolation that are intensified by the stigma associated with mental illness. As a result, many withdraw from friends and family and do not seek help," said Amy Niles, president and CEO of the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC), co-sponsor of the program with Eli Lilly and Company. "While it is vital to seek treatment from a healthcare professional, finding support is crucial to becoming well."

Support Partners offers a step-by-step approach to building partnerships between people living with depression and those who want to help them. Dano, most famous for her role as "Felicia Gallant" on NBC's *Another World*, credits her healthcare professional and friends as key players in helping her learn how to talk about her illness, and to making her recovery more achievable. Through her personal experience, she hopes to help others whose isolation from, or embarrassment about their illness, may be unnecessarily prolonging or deepening depression's grip on their lives.

"When I started battling depression, it was so much more than being sad all the time -- I didn't feel like me anymore. I had no joy in doing things I used to love, like working and spending time with friends. I had trouble sleeping, and had mysterious pains in my back that didn't go away," said Dano. "Educating myself and learning how to tell the people in my life how to be there for me in a way that was comfortable for all of us, is helping me work my way back."

Depression is a medical illness, like diabetes and heart disease, which needs to be treated by a healthcare professional. Despite years of public awareness about depression, many people are unable to recognize the emotional and physical symptoms that are the hallmark of the illness.

Emotional symptoms can include sadness, hopelessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating or loss of interest in activities that once were enjoyable. Physical symptoms may surface as vague aches and pains, such as back pain, digestive problems, fatigue or lack of energy, changes in sleep patterns or appetite.

About Support Partners

A Support Partner is someone who is committed to helping a friend or loved one with depression. He or she provides assistance as needed, builds on the strengths of the person living with depression, and encourages actions that allow recovery to happen.

Support can be given in many ways and is based on an individual's needs. Some people may need their Support Partner to provide a safe haven for discussing the struggles, triumphs and setbacks of depression, while others may seek assistance with daily tasks that may be overwhelming at first. Anyone can be a Support Partner, including family, friends, co-workers, neighbors and religious/spiritual leaders.

Dano refers to her Support Partners as her "angels," people who encouraged her and provided comfort in knowing that she is not in this alone. "I cannot stress enough to those battling depression and those who are watching someone struggle -- please open the lines of communication -- support can make a world of difference," she said.

Support Partners Resources

The Support Partners program offers the following guidebooks, which should be shared between a person with depression and his/her Support Partner. A copy of the guidebooks can be obtained by visiting www.DepressionHurts.com, or by calling 888-818-7988.

* Managing Your Depression - Written for those battling depression, it contains information on recognizing the emotional/physical symptoms of depression, how to identify a Support Partner, tips for getting the conversation started, and ways to track progress and recovery.

* Being a Support Partner - Tailored to meet the needs of people who want to help someone with depression, but are either unsure of how to start the conversation or how to offer help. It provides practical advice and exercises that will help determine the level of commitment and how to provide assistance.

* Shared Guidebook - Can be reviewed together by both the person living with depression and his/her Support Partner. Because each person experiences the illness differently, this guide captures important personal information and provides a simple approach to mapping out a wellness plan, which can define treatment and recovery goals in partnership with your healthcare professional.

About Depression

Nearly 19 million Americans suffer from depression.(i) It can happen to anyone of any age, race or ethnic group, however women are nearly twice as likely to experience depression as men.(ii) Although it is one of the most frequently seen psychiatric disorders in the primary care setting, it often goes undiagnosed or is under-treated.(iii) This may be because depressed patients often present physical symptoms rather than emotional complaints. In one study, nearly 70 percent of patients diagnosed with depression reported physical symptoms as their chief reason for seeking help.(iv)

The goal of treatment is to help people with depression feel more like themselves, so they can move forward with their lives. Depression symptoms that don't go away completely can prevent people with depression from getting fully well, and may increase the risk of symptoms coming back. Nobody should settle for feeling only slightly better. With the right treatment and support, recovering from depression is possible.

About Linda Dano

Emmy-award winning actress, talk-show host, designer and author, Linda Dano has built a career that spans more than 30 years, but is, perhaps, best known for her memorable roles in daytime television on *Another World*, *All My Children*, *One Life to Live* and *General Hospital*. Ms. Dano has also enjoyed a diverse career working in Hollywood in primetime television and film, as host of Lifetime Television's *Attitudes* and *Lifetime NOW!*, and as President of *Strictly Personal*, a fashion consulting business that created the Linda Dano line of fashion accessories for QVC. She will soon be seen in a limited run on CBS' *Guiding Light* and in the title role of *MAME*, her first musical theater project opening in June 2005.

About the National Women's Health Resource Center

The National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) is the nation's leading independent, nonprofit health information source for women. NWHRC addresses a broad range of women's health concerns and issues and develops comprehensive and objective health information based on the latest advances in health research. NWHRC focuses on disease prevention and wellness, and connects women with reliable health information sources. Its programs include the development of national health campaigns, its bimonthly newsletter, *The National Women's Health Report*, development and distribution of consumer educational materials, and its Web site, www.healthywomen.org.

About Lilly

Lilly, a leading innovation-driven corporation, is developing a growing portfolio of first-in-class and best-in-class pharmaceutical products by applying the latest research from its own worldwide laboratories and from collaborations with eminent scientific organizations. Headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind., Lilly provides answers -- through medicines and information -- for some of the world's most urgent medical needs. Additional information about Lilly is available at www.lilly.com. P-LLY

(i) National Institute of Mental Health. Depression Research at the National Institute of Mental Health: Fact Sheet. Available at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depresfact.cfm>. Accessed May 12, 2004.

(ii) American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 4th ed., Text Revision. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association; 2000:345-428.

(iii) Kroenke K, et al. *Am J Med*. 1997; 103(5):339-347.

(iv) Simon GE, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 1999; 341(18):1329-1335.

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SOURCE Eli Lilly and Company

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