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**For Grace to Host 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Women in Pain Conference and Live Webcast:  
“Finding Your Tribe”**

*The Sept. 14 conference will focus on pain and relationships,  
with a special emphasis on the caring for a person with pain.*

LOS ANGELES (June 22, 2012) – For Grace will host its **5th Annual Women In Pain Conference: Finding Your Tribe** on Sept. 14 at the California Endowment’s Center for Healthy Communities in downtown Los Angeles and via live webcast. The conference will bring together hundreds of women in pain, their caregivers and the healthcare professionals who treat them along with leaders in pain management, pain psychology and advocacy to examine how chronic pain can have a toxic effect on relationships, and to give women the tools to maintain wellness and strong ties to loved ones.

*Five CEUs will be available for Registered Nurses in attendance, and the event will be open to all via a live worldwide webcast. For more information and to register, please visit:  
<http://www.forgrace.org/women/in/pain/C265>.*

The conference will feature presentations and breakout sessions from distinguished pain psychologists, medical and wellness practitioners, and pain advocates who will focus on helping women in pain and their caregivers to maintain strong, healthy relationships. The conference will explore alternative and complementary approaches, including gentle yoga, diet and exercise, pet therapy and other self-care approaches to help participants understand how these techniques impact wellness and life force.

Living with chronic pain – whether it stems from fibromyalgia, arthritis, back pain, or some other condition – places a strain on all important relationships, especially if one partner is skeptical about the source or severity of the pain, and the other feels he or she is not receiving the proper understanding and support. Money worries and intimate relations with a spouse can be difficult. Chronic pain can also be very upsetting to children who may feel anxious, angry or guilty if they assume they did something to cause the pain. Relationships with healthcare professionals and others can break down when patients are told the pain is “all in your head,” a common message that family and friends have sometimes taken to heart as well.

This year’s conference theme, “Finding Your Tribe” is inspired by For Grace founder Cynthia Toussaint’s personal journey with pain and bouts of estrangement from family and friends. A pain sufferer since the age of 21 when a minor ballet injury turned into a lifetime of chronic pain, Toussaint has been in partial remission for three years and enjoying a full life that includes swimming, singing and other activities she hasn’t done for more than 25 years.

"In my 30-years of pain, relationships have been the most painful and joyful part of the experience. Pain changes every relationship for the sufferer, including the one you have with yourself. It brings out the best or worst in everyone. These relationships are the most integral aspect of the chronic pain experience, yet they often get overlooked," said Toussaint. "'Finding Your Tribe' is about connecting with those who bring you compassion, understanding, support and, ultimately, positive life force in your dance with pain. And in a healthy relationship, that energy goes both ways. But first we must find peace within ourselves before we can cultivate this nurturing circle."

According to the American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA), more than 80 million people in the United States suffer from pain every day. The latest research shows that women are more likely to suffer from chronic pain than men, and the pain can come more frequently and hit with greater intensity. Today, about one-third of family caregivers are men.

The one-day conference will kick-off at 9:00 am on Sept. 14 with a keynote address by **Dr. Donna Benton**, Director of the Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center. Three caregivers – two of whom are chronic pain sufferers themselves – will present a session on maintaining balance and wellness while caring for a person with pain. Pain psychologists will discuss how emotions and relationships affect pain levels, and will offer coping solutions for unhealthy relationships. The final panel will be moderated by women in pain who will share their personal struggles and triumphs. Additional conference activities include live performance and creative arts by women in pain and the women in pain experience featuring stand-up comedy by **Dea Vice**, a photo essay by **Dana Gambill**, and an award-winning art gallery by **Radene Marie Cook**. Also, For Grace founder Toussaint will debut a music video, *Kind and Generous*, which will be dedicated to all caregivers.

Confirmed speakers and panelists include:

**Dr. Donna Benton**, Director of the Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center

**Dr. Bruce Levine**, Pain Psychologist and Clinical Psychologist for A&E's "Hoarders" show

**Dr. Shelly Segal**, Pain Psychologist with UCLA's Pediatric Pain Program

**Radene Marie Cook** – Woman in Pain and California Co-Leader, American Pain Foundation's Action Network

**Cynthia Toussaint** – Founder/Spokesperson, For Grace

### **About For Grace**

Founded in 2002, For Grace is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure the ethical and equal treatment of all women in pain. For Grace has educated, supported and empowered thousands of women in pain through the use of public advocacy, legislative outreach, and mass media. For more information, please visit For Grace online at [www.forgrace.org](http://www.forgrace.org).

*Reporters seeking to attend the 5th Annual Women in Pain Conference must contact John Garrett at 818-760-7635 or [jgarrett@forgrace.org](mailto:jgarrett@forgrace.org).*

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