

THE LEEZA GIBBONS MEMORY FOUNDATION

PRESS & MEDIA CONTACT:

Bobby Xydis

Associate Director of Communications

Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation / Leeza's Place

(888) OK-LEEZA

bobby@leezasplace.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leeza's Place Ends Relationship with WellMed Charitable Foundation in the Rio Grande Valley

PEMBROKE PINES, FL – *January 31, 2011* - When my mom and dad celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary they sat in front of a fire with a box containing all the love letters they had written each other during a quarter century. They untied the ribbon holding the bundles of letters and read each one aloud; hearing those words that they each said would be forever etched in their hearts. After the words were spoken, they threw each letter into the flames, secure that they would never forget them. By the time their 50th anniversary came around, my mother was deep into the darkness of Alzheimer's disease and she did forget those love letters, just as she had forgotten her three children, her husband and her rich, wonderful life.

Before the thief of memories stole my mother completely, she asked me to tell her story and make it count. How blessed I am that we have been able to do that across the country and in Texas with Leeza's Place, our free support centers for family caregivers. With the help of the WellMed Charitable Foundation, we created in Texas what our family wished we'd had when my mom and grandmother were disappearing from Alzheimer's.

Inspired by my parent's efforts to write letters expressing their heart's truth, this is my love letter to all those who have given birth to our caregiver support effort in The Rio Grande Valley community...to those who nurture the dream every day, and especially to those courageous caregivers who make up the community oasis called Leeza's Place.

At the Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation, we are moving forward...finding new ways to offer our service on a national platform while staying community based. In this spirit, we have transitioned out of our relationship in the Rio Grande Valley with WellMed Charitable Foundation, Physicians Health Choice and the Area Agency on Aging. Therefore we are no longer providing Leeza's Place programs in the Rio Grande Valley.

Passages always offer a unique perspective and this one gives me great gratitude and appreciation for Dr. George Rapier and his vision, passion, leadership and action. Along with his wife Kym and the entire management team, WellMed's long-standing commitment to improving the lives of seniors, their caregivers and families in the greater San Antonio area has been remarkable. In the past few years, the WellMed Charitable Foundation has contributed more than 3 million dollars to the community. We have been so blessed to be included in their generosity through their funding of our two Leeza's Place locations in San Antonio and one in the Rio Grande Valley.

Everyone who visits the Rio Grande Valley falls in love...we did too, and we feel deeply connected to the community. We are also grateful to the City of Edinburg for their forward thinking, combining public and private equity to enhance the lives of seniors in the Rio Grande area through programs such as Leeza's Place. The Area Agency on Aging, Physicians Health Choice and WellMed Charitable Foundation were able to join forces with us through Leeza's Place to offer help, hope and healing for those families most in need.

I believe every time we share our love and energy, we take that with us as we journey forward. How lucky for us that we get to take what we learned and experienced from Jose Gonzales, Richard Manning, Carol Zernial, Debbie Billa, Dan Comrie and Rita Ayala with us.

At the heart of our Leeza's Places is our care advocate and here in the Rio Grande Valley, we have one of the most loving, creative, resourceful and responsible angels we could ever hope for...Letty Q. Sanchez. This bright light has offered education, empowerment and energy to family caregivers while building a solid community of strength and support. She, with the support of her incredible volunteer crews never failed to give us their very best and I'm so proud of her.

And so, as it is with any love letter, this one is delivered with deep emotion. It began in early 2009 as a dream to find a way to make life better for others. We turn the page now, knowing that our lives became so much better and richer in the process.

We are forever grateful to the citizens of the Rio Grande Valley for embracing us and especially for our guests at Leeza's Place for the extreme privilege of sharing their journey. Even though we have ended our relationship with the WellMed Charitable Foundation, we continue shoulder-to-shoulder, hand-in-hand with all those who support caregiver causes.

The Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation remains committed to serving caregivers and their loved ones through our other Leeza's Place locations across the country and we will continue to expand our innovative programs and services to many more communities in need.

Stay tuned for more information on all our exciting new growth, changes and development!

Gratefully,



Leeza Gibbons

Board Chair, Co-Founder

Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation

leeza@leezasplace.org



Leeza's Place is the signature program of the Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation.

For more information, visit www.LeezasPlace.org.

###