

# THE LEEZA GIBBONS MEMORY FOUNDATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Leeza's Place Ends Relationship with WellMed Charitable Foundation in San Antonio**

PEMBROKE PINES, FL – *March 10, 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 San Antonio 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. It is in this spirit that we announce we will be winding down our partnership with WellMed Charitable Foundation over the next few months. Therefore, we will no longer provide Leeza's Place programs and services at our Nacogdoches location after March 31, 2011 and the Bob Ross Senior Center after May 31, 2011.

Because we are always focused on the health and well-being of caregivers, we are happy to report that WellMed has decided to continue offering caregiver services under their own banner. The Leeza's Place brand will no longer be associated with WellMed and their new centers. We are proud of our

relationship with the WellMed Charitable Foundation and the empowered community of caregivers we've built together. For those caregivers in the San Antonio area looking for support, please contact Nellie Garay, Caregiver Support Specialist, at the Area Agency on Aging at (210) 362-5271.

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 San Antonio falls in love with the city...we did too, and we feel deeply connected to the community. We are so grateful to WellMed Charitable Foundation and the city for their forward thinking, combining public and private equity to enhance the lives of seniors in San Antonio and Bexar County through senior centers such as the Bob Ross Senior Center and through innovative programs such as Leeza's Place...offering 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 Pete McKinnon, Cindy Schoenmakers, Richard Manning, Carol Zernial, and Debbie Billa with us.

At the heart of our Leeza's Places is our care advocate and here in San Antonio, we have two of the most loving, creative, resourceful and responsible angels we could ever hope for...Marisa Chapa and Rita Avendano. These bright lights have offered education, empowerment and energy to family caregivers while building a solid community of strength and support. They, with the support of their incredible volunteer crews led by Nadine Bradshaw and Linda Pike, never failed to give us their very best and I'm so proud of these beautiful women.

And so, as it is with any love letter, this one is delivered with deep emotion. It began in 2007 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 San Antonio 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*

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

*For more information, visit [www.LeezasPlace.org](http://www.LeezasPlace.org).*

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