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ORGAN DONATION, SAFE SEX AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE STORYLINES NAMED AS FINALISTS FOR THE SENTINEL FOR HEALTH AWARD FOR DAYTIME DRAMA BY HOLLYWOOD, HEALTH & SOCIETY AND THE CDC

Los Angeles, CA – Hollywood, Health & Society, a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the USC Annenberg School's Norman Lear Center, announced four finalists today for the fourth annual Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama. The award recognizes exemplary achievements of daytime drama storylines that inform, educate and motivate viewers to make choices for healthier and safer lives.

The storylines selected by CDC health experts as finalists are: "Organ Donation: Rick Bauer Gets Richard Winslow's Heart" and "Safe Sex: Marina Prepares to Sleep with Ben," both from *Guiding Light*, "Al's Drug Addiction" from *One Life to Live*, and "Neil's Battle with Alcoholism" from *The Young & the Restless*. The winner is selected by a panel of entertainment professionals and health communication experts, and will be announced at a VIP reception on September 16th at the Writers Guild of America west.

"We are pleased to continue our partnership with the CDC in presenting the 2003 Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama," said Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and director of the Norman Lear Center. "The award reminds us of the key role that writers and producers play in delivering essential health messages to loyal daytime drama audiences who tell us they learn about health from watching the soaps."

CDC analysis of data from the 1999 Healthstyles Survey shows that nearly half (48%) of regular viewers of soap operas, those who watch at least twice a week, learned about a disease or how to prevent it from a soap opera. More than one-third (34%) took some action as a result, such as discussing it with others, giving advice or calling a doctor.

"Through their storytelling, writers and producers can influence audience members to prevent a disease or injury, and to seek early diagnosis and treatment," added Vicki Beck, director of the Lear Center's Hollywood, Health & Society project and former director of the CDC's program for entertainment education. "That is why we recognize their work and encourage them to use accurate information to address health issues."

Healthstyles data indicate soap opera viewers also tend to have more health concerns and more negative beliefs about disease prevention than non-viewers, seek out health information more

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than non-viewers, but have more difficulty understanding the information they read. (The Healthstyles Survey is a proprietary database product developed by Porter Novelli. The data on soap opera viewers was analyzed by the CDC and findings were reported at the 128th American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Exposition, November 15, 2000 in Boston.)

In 2000, “Viki’s Breast Cancer,” produced by *One Life to Live* won the Sentinel award and in 2001, “Raul’s Diabetes” produced by *The Young and the Restless* was honored. The third Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama was given in 2002 to CBS’s *The Bold and the Beautiful* for the storyline titled “Tony’s HIV.” The CDC noted a dramatic increase in callers to the national AIDS hotline from a public service announcement that aired after the character Tony learned of his HIV status, and again after he disclosed his diagnosis to his girlfriend.

Each storyline entry for the Sentinel for Health Award is reviewed by a panel of CDC experts for accuracy of depictions. Finalists move on to a second round of judging by a panel of experts representing entertainment, advocacy, academic and public health organizations. The panel reviews storylines for entertainment value and potential benefit to the viewing audience.

Funded by the CDC, Hollywood, Health & Society provides entertainment industry professionals with accurate and timely information for health storylines. It is based at the USC Annenberg School’s Norman Lear Center as a one-stop-shop for writers, producers and others in search of credible information on a wide range of public health topics. The Lear Center works with the CDC to supply writers and producers of all types of entertainment content with accurate health information through individual briefings, special seminars, expert consultation and through an innovative Web site, www.entertainment.usc.edu/hhs.

The Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce and society. Based at the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Lear Center works to bridge the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. For more information, visit www.learcenter.org.

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the USC Annenberg School for Communication is among the nation’s leading institutions devoted to the study of journalism and communication, and their impact on politics, culture and society. With an enrollment of more than 1500 graduate and undergraduate students, USC Annenberg offers B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in journalism, communications and public relations. For more information, visit www.annenberg.usc.edu.

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