

For Release: June 10, 2002

**Contact: Saundra Halgrimson
 (818) 981-3446 / (323) 791-3635
 Vicki Beck
 (760) 431-6765 / (310) 274-5588**

**THIRD ANNUAL COMPETITION TO RECOGNIZE HEALTH STORYLINES IN DAYTIME
DRAMA ANNOUNCED BY USC ANNEBERG'S NORMAN LEAR CENTER AND THE CDC**

Los Angeles, CA -- The third annual competition for the Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama has been announced by Hollywood, Health & Society, a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the USC Annenberg School's Norman Lear Center. The Award was first developed by the CDC to recognize exemplary achievements of writers and producers who demonstrate a commitment to health issues in TV soap operas.

Any TV daytime drama that originates and airs in the United States and that addresses public health issues is eligible to enter the competition. Entries are due by June 30. Finalists will be announced in September and a winner will be announced Oct. 26 in Century City, CA, at the Soap Summit conference sponsored by Population Communications International.

"People who watch soaps are not only entertained by them - they also take in information that affects the lifestyle choices they make. That can have a profound impact on their health," said Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and director of the Norman Lear Center. "That's why we're pleased to honor exemplary storylines by daytime dramas in partnership with the CDC."

The second Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama was given on October 26, 2001 to CBS's *The Young and the Restless*, for the storyline titled "Raul's Diabetes," which focused on the diagnosis and treatment of a teenager with diabetes. As part of a public service effort, the show also produced and aired a public service ad that provided a phone number for the American Diabetes Association. More than two hundred viewers called the number for information and dozens more sent letters to the show. The letters and calls hint at the story's impact on viewers - including many viewers who reported that they or a loved one visited a health care provider to be diagnosed with diabetes.

"Through their storytelling, writers and producers can influence audience members to prevent a disease or injury, and to seek early diagnosis and treatment as we saw with the diabetes storyline," added Vicki Beck, director of the Lear Center's Hollywood, Health & Society project.

Other storylines recognized by the CDC award program have dealt with a range of public health topics - fetal alcohol syndrome, HIV, teen substance abuse, breast cancer and disability. Each entry is first screened for eligibility, and then 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 from entertainment, advocacy, academic and public health organizations. The second 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 and its partner organizations to supply writers and producers of entertainment programs with accurate health information through individual briefings, special seminars, expert consultation, health tip sheets and 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.