

## MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 15 April 2009



### **Cystic Fibrosis Australia 2009 65 Roses Day Ambassador Virginia Gay, Calls for Champions to Support the 2009 65 ROSES DAY CAMPAIGN**

The newly appointed 65 Roses Day Ambassador, Virginia Gay has launched a national appeal on behalf of Cystic Fibrosis Australia, inviting ALL Australians to become 'Champions' and volunteer to help raise vital funds by selling 65 Roses Day merchandise throughout the month of May.

Every four days a baby is born with cystic fibrosis which is a serious illness affecting their lungs and digestive system. There is no cure for this debilitating and life threatening disorder that brings hardship to many families.

**65 Roses Day (Friday May 29)** is Cystic Fibrosis Australia's primary national, annual campaign that generates awareness of the illness, raises vital funds to help people living with cystic fibrosis, and funds critical research projects in the quest to find a cure.

Cystic Fibrosis Australia's CEO Terry Stewart said, "we are absolutely thrilled to have Virginia Gay's support for the 65 Roses Day Campaign, particularly during these difficult financial times when we remain dependant on others to continue raising vital funds that will help cystic fibrosis families and continue funding essential research projects into this serious illness."

Virginia Gay, 65 Roses Day Ambassador said she was humbled to have been invited to support the important work of Cystic Fibrosis Australia. "This is a tremendous honour," said Gay. "For me there is no point to life if we don't give something back to our community, particularly if our support can help to impact on improving critical health outcomes for children and young adults," she said.

Virginia Gay who is best known for her role as Nurse Gabrielle Jaeger on Seven's drama All Saints, teamed up with five-year-old, Kate Daly (born with cystic fibrosis) to voice the radio community service announcement that will air nationally from mid April to the end of May - 65 Roses Day, Friday 29 May. "Kate was just divine – so professional!" said Gay.

"I can't think of a more valuable contribution than raising money to fund important research that will help to give kids like Kate a chance at life. If I didn't do something to help this important cause, I wouldn't want to be friends with me," Gay said.

"Even in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, we can all still do something to help. We can all give a little, or we can become a Champion and help sell 65 Roses Merchandise. I hope that people from every corner of Australia will come on board - **we have the power** to raise vital funds that will help people born with cystic fibrosis, and help scientists to continue their search for a cure," she said.

Be a Champion! Volunteer to sell wristbands, pens and other merchandise to your family, friends, workmates and neighbours and support the life saving and life changing work of Cystic Fibrosis Australia.

**Call 1800 635 008 or visit [65rosesday.org.au](http://65rosesday.org.au) to register to become a 'Champion' for 65 Roses Day.**



**To arrange an interview** with CEO Mr Terry Stewart, Ms. Virginia Gay, or for further information or a photograph of Virginia Gay with Kate Daly please contact: Clare Collins - Insight Communications  
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# JOURNALIST NOTES

## VIRGINIA GAY

### 65 Roses Day Ambassador 2009



When Virginia Gay was invited to be the 65 Roses Day Ambassador and promote the need to support Cystic Fibrosis Australia, she was both delighted and excited to be involved in such a worthwhile cause with an internationally respected organisation.

65 Roses Day (Friday May 29) is Cystic Fibrosis Australia's (CFA) primary national, annual awareness campaign with the aim to generate awareness of the illness, raise funds to help people and families living with cystic fibrosis, and fund critical research projects in the quest to find a cure.

Best known for her role as Nurse Gabrielle Jaeger on Channel 7's drama *All Saints*, Virginia Gay, a Drama graduate of Newtown High School of the Performing Arts, studied a Bachelor of Arts (English Literature and Performance Studies) at the University of Sydney before successfully auditioning for the prestigious Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts (WAAPA). In 2005 Virginia was awarded the 2005 Coles Myer Vocational Student of the Year (WA), the Sangora Education Foundation Award, and the Leslie Anderson Award for best graduating performer.

When Virginia graduated she joined the cast of *All Saints* and has been having the time of her life playing Gabrielle Jaeger for the past three years.

When she's not filming *All Saints*, Virginia turns her focus to helping the community, having been involved in fundraising activities from an early age. From performing centre stage at fundraising events during her student years, to appearing for the Good Friday Appeal in Victoria and the Channel 7 Telethon in Western Australia that raises funds for Princess Margaret Children's Hospital in WA, it is clear that Virginia is passionate about supporting community organisations particularly those related to health and research. She is a mainstay of the Leukaemia Research Fundraiser - Light the Night, and continues to raise funds and awareness for Concord Hospital, the Red Cross Blood Bank, and Can Assist lunches.

In 2008, during her appearance on Channel 7's *It Takes Two*, Virginia nominated the international healthcare aid organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières to be the beneficiary of the funds raised during the program and following her role as Lynn in a Gala Fundraiser Performance of *Breast Wishes – An Uplifting Musical*, Virginia also became a supporter of breast cancer research.

When Virginia was invited to take on the role of 65 Roses Day Ambassador she was humbled at having been asked to support the important work of Cystic Fibrosis Australia and considered it a tremendous honour to support such a worthwhile and important cause.

"I have no medical skills, and I have a tendency to feel helpless in the face of children and families dealing so bravely with cystic fibrosis. It's so easy to think, well, I'm not a real doctor, what can I do? But that's the wonderful thing, all of us can help enormously and so easily by simply donating a little time, and a little money. I've had a lot of luck in my life. If I didn't do something to help, to give back to this important cause, I wouldn't want to be friends with me," Virginia said.



*Kate Daly with Virginia Gay on the set of All Saints –  
Photo by Encapture Photography*

## **65 ROSES DAY CAMPAIGN - 15 April (Call for Champions) to 31 May 2009**

### **65 ROSES DAY - Friday May 29, 2009**

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#### **1. Background**

65 Roses Day is Cystic Fibrosis Australia's (CFA) primary awareness campaign that is used to raise funds for people living with CF, and to finance critical research projects.

Cystic Fibrosis Australia raises money for the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust as well as support services for young people who have CF and their families.

#### **2. Why "65 Roses Day"?**

"65 Roses" is a small child's effort to pronounce his sister's condition. As he couldn't pronounce "cystic fibrosis" he called the condition "65 Roses". The red rose is the symbol for cystic fibrosis.

#### **3. When is 65 Roses Day?**

Friday 29 May - 65 Roses Day - is the national fundraising day for Cystic Fibrosis Australia. However, we are aiming to gain media coverage from mid April to the end of May, commencing with the call for Champions.

#### **4. How does CFA raise funds?**

CFA raises funds through the sale of 65 Roses Day merchandise throughout the month of may include wristbands, pens and other merchandise. Outlets include: participating L.J Hooker offices, Big W and Cheap as Chips.

CFA also calls for Champions to volunteer to sell merchandise to family, friends, workmates and neighbours.

#### **5. What is Cystic Fibrosis?**

Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is the most common recessive genetic condition affecting Australian children and young adults today. It primarily affects the lungs and digestive system by clogging them with thick, sticky mucus. Repeated chest infections can cause irreversible damage and untimely death. Mucus can also cause problems in the pancreas preventing the release of enzymes needed for the digestion of food.

#### **6. Who is affected?**

CF is an inherited condition. For a child to be born with CF both parents must be genetic carriers for CF. They do not have to have CF themselves.

#### **7. How common is CF?**

Approximately one in every 2500 babies will be born with CF with one child born every four days.







Two-thirds of infants born with CF will be diagnosed in the first year of life. In all, about 3,000 adults and children are living with this disorder. There are 1 million carriers of CF in Australia.

## 8. How is CF diagnosed?

In Australia, all babies are screened at birth for CF. A blood spot test is applied and if this test proves to be positive a sweat test will be done to measure the amount of salt in the sweat. It is with this test that a final diagnosis is made.

## 9. What are the symptoms of CF?

CF affects primarily the lungs and digestive system. People with CF may have the following symptoms:

-  Persistent cough, particularly with physical effort
-  Some difficulty in breathing or wheezing with effort
-  Tiredness, lethargy or impaired exercise ability
-  Frequent visits to the toilet
-  Salt loss in hot weather which may produce weakness
-  Poor appetite

## 10. Is CF contagious?

CF is not contagious. Coughing is a frequent symptom of CF. Some people are afraid they may catch it, but CF is an inherited condition which is present at birth. You cannot “catch” CF and you cannot give it to anyone else.

## 11. What is the life expectancy for someone with CF?

Until quite recently CF was a genetic mystery, and most people with the disease died before they reached their teen years. Due to improved research, the average age expectancy is now around the mid 30s.

## 12. What has been the impact of CF research?

Over the past 10 years researchers have made great progress in understanding the genetic basis of CF, and this has led to earlier detection. Research has also led to better knowledge and management of the condition, and extended life expectancy.

## 13. Is there a cure for CF?

There is no cure for Cystic Fibrosis. However, with today's improved treatments most people with CF are able to lead reasonably normal and productive lives. A great amount of time, energy and money is being directed towards finding new and improved ways of treating CF and finally finding a cure. It is hoped that the emerging field of gene therapy may soon help to correct lung problems in people with CF.

## 14. What treatment is currently available?

While there is currently no cure, CF sufferers undertake intense daily chest physiotherapy to move mucus in the lungs. 40 enzyme replacement tablets are taken each day to aid digestion.

## 15. What is needed?

Money!!! Cystic Fibrosis Australia does not receive government funding for research. The money raised through 65 Roses Day products and donations fund research that will improve treatments and hopefully find a cure for this debilitating and life threatening disorder.

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**For further information visit: [www.65rosesday.org.au](http://www.65rosesday.org.au)** or to arrange an interview with CEO Mr Terry Stewart, Ms. Virginia Gay, or require further information or a photograph of Virginia Gay with Kate Daly please contact:

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