

**MEDIA RELEASE – Monday 25 MAY**

## **Virginia Gay Visits Cystic Fibrosis Patient at RPA In The Lead Up To**

**65 ROSES DAY - FRIDAY 29 MAY**

***“Please Help Us Find A Cure & Give Kids & Young Adults A Chance At Life”***

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Virginia Gay, Ambassador for 65 Roses Day who is best known for her role as Nurse Gabrielle Jaeger on Channel Seven’s drama All Saints, visited with cystic fibrosis patient, Brad Lasocki at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA).

Brad Lasocki, who was a few days into an annual hospital visit (2-3 week treatment known in the CF community as a ‘Tune Up’) was delighted to meet the 65 Roses Day Ambassador saying, “It was lovely of Virginia to drop by with a bunch of roses. Not only was it very romantic but it was great to meet her and talk about the great work she is doing to promote the cause for cystic fibrosis.”

Friday 29 May is 65 Roses Day. Cystic Fibrosis in Australia is conducting this national appeal to help children and young adults living with cystic fibrosis.

65 Roses Day is the primary 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.

Mr Lasocki said, “Improvements in medication and treatment are seeing people like me live to 40 and beyond. I hope the support for CF continues and they can eventually find a cure.”

Ambassador Virginia Gay said, “I can’t think of a more valuable contribution than raising money that will help give kids a chance at life. We can all give a little or purchase merchandise. We have the power to raise vital funds that will help to improve critical health outcomes for children and young adults and importantly, help scientists to continue their search for a cure,” Gay said.

Cystic Fibrosis Australia’s CEO Terry Stewart said, “There are children and young adults in every state and territory of Australia who suffer this debilitating illness. There is no cure. Only with the help of the community, can we ensure every Australian living with cystic fibrosis can have the very best care until we can find the cure. Australians are generous people and although these are difficult times, we still desperately need the support of the Australian community.”

On Friday 29 May, purchase 65 Roses Day merchandise including wrist bands, pins, pens and other merchandise from participating LJ Hooker offices, Big W and Ted’s Camera Stores or make a donation online at [www.65rosesday.org.au](http://www.65rosesday.org.au) or call 1800 635 008.

### **We are able to offer both pre-record and live interviews with:**

- Mr Brad Lasocki
- Ms Virginia Gay – 65 Roses Day Ambassador 2009
- Mr Terry Stewart – CEO – Cystic Fibrosis Australia

### **For more information and to arrange an interview please contact:**

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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 (who has cystic fibrosis) with Virginia Gay on the set of All Saints Photo by Encapture*

## **65 Roses Day for Cystic Fibrosis - 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.