



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

For more information, contact:

Mark Cohen, Sr. VP/Communications & Public Relations

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, 305-350-5905

Megan Carella, APR, Public Relations Specialist

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, 352-560-3415

**California State University Northridge and VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®
Present Play About End-of-Life Care**

“VESTA” will raise awareness of death and dying

Northridge, California, September 29, 2008 — A one-act play about a dying woman and the choices that she and her family must make as she approaches the end of her life will be presented by California State University Northridge and VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® of Los Angeles and Ventura County. “VESTA,” will be presented on Friday, October 3, 2008, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, October 4, and Sunday, October 5, at 1 p.m. at the Music Recital Hall at CSUN’s Cypress Hall, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330.

Written by Bryan Harnetiaux and directed by Doug Kaback, VESTA will introduce the audience to the real-life issues surrounding a terminal diagnosis, offering an in-depth look at how to deal with the loss of independence, economic hardship, family dynamics and care giving.

The production is part of VITAS’ and CSUN’s ongoing effort to use community partnerships to promote conversations about end-of-life care issues. A panel discussion will immediately follow the production, moderated by Jeanne Twohig of the Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life.

The title character is a grandmother in her late 70s who confronts the loss of independence after a stroke, a series of complex medical, economic and personal issues following a fight with cancer, and, inevitably, her death.

“The power of art can provoke people and open a dialogue to a subject many are uncomfortable discussing,” says David Lackey, VITAS volunteer manager. “The point of VESTA is to take the way the elderly are treated during the last few years of their lives out of the shadows. We’re asking how we can bring dignity to end-of-life issues.”

“We’re trying to turn something so difficult into a more positive experience. I lost my wife five years ago, it was hard and my family and I weren’t ready for it, so this play has a special place near my own life,” said Doug Kaback, director of VESTA.

In addition to performances at CSUN and at three community senior centers, students can participate in a unique interdisciplinary learning experience. Students can explore issues through

research, fieldwork and discussions with experts and community members. CSUN departments, including sociology, theatre, health sciences, music and journalism, will actively participate in the production of VESTA. A panel discussion will be held after each performance to offer the audience additional information regarding end-of-life issues. It will be followed by a question-and-answer session open to all audience members.

The Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life at Duke University, Durham, NC, first produced a similar project in April 2007 and looks forward to supporting and participating with CSUN and with this latest production.

Tickets are free with a suggested donation of \$10 to benefit the Foundation for End of Life Care (also known as the VITAS Hospice Charitable Fund). All proceeds will go to supporting specific and immediate special needs of individual dying patients and families that go beyond the services that hospices can provide. Seating is limited. Call 818.677.7395 to RSVP. For more information, contact David Lackey at 800.757.4242.

The Department of Theatre at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), consists of three theatres where each semester, a total of four to seven productions are generated. Each semester, the Theatre Department is proud to serve over 200 undergraduate students and graduate theatre majors. Some of CSUN's 2008-2009 season plays are "El Estudio del Maestro" — by David Tittle, "The Importance of being EARNEST" — by Oscar Wilde, "Le Nozze de Figaro" — by Mozart, "Bill's New Frock" — by Anne Fine. For more information, call (818)-677-1200.

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, a pioneer and leader in the hospice movement since 1978, is one of the nation's largest providers of end-of-life care. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, VITAS (pronounced VEE-tahs) operates 46 hospice programs in 16 states (California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin). VITAS employs 8,998 professionals who care for terminally ill patients daily, primarily in the patients' homes, but also in the company's 25 inpatient hospice units as well as in hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living communities/residential care facilities for the elderly. At the conclusion of the second quarter of 2008, VITAS reported an average daily census of 11,924.

###