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Nation's Largest Dialysis Patient Organization Recognizes the Achievements of Patients and Leaders in Kidney Care

Representative Donna Christensen recognized for her contributions to kidney care

Washington, D.C. (September 20, 2007) – DaVita Patient Citizens (DPC) – a nationwide patient advocacy group comprised of more than 20,000 dialysis and pre-dialysis patients and family members – held its annual Gala and Awards program today. Entitled, *Celebrating the Empowerment of Kidney Patients*, the event brought together dialysis patients and members of the kidney care community to extol the achievements of kidney patients and those within the community who dedicate their lives to improving care.

2007 Gala Award recipients include:

- **Donna M. Christensen, MD.** Representative Christensen (D-VI) is the chair the Congressional Black Caucus' Health Brain Trust. A physician, she has been a leader in focusing Congress' attention on kidney care issues.
- **Jack W. Moncrief, MD.** Dr. Moncrief from Austin, TX is credited with developing Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis—a method of dialysis that allows the blood to be cleaned within the abdominal cavity.
- **American Kidney Fund (AKF).** AKF is a leader in providing financial assistance to chronic kidney disease patients across the nation. In 2006, AKF served more than 63,500 patients, distributing \$81.9 million in grants.
- **Abbott Laboratories.** Abbott Laboratories, the makers of *Zemplar*, are a key partner of DPC. Their support has allowed DPC to provide kidney care education to thousands of patients.
- **Ardell Lien.** A Minnesotan, Mr. Lien received a heart and kidney transplant in 2003, and subsequently sailed around the work to raise awareness about the need for organ donation.

“On behalf of the kidney community, we are honored to recognize the achievements of empowered kidney patients and their advocates,” said Patricia Orna, DPC President. “The actions of our award recipients truly inspire those within the kidney care community. Each and every one of our honorees has taken great steps toward improving the quality of life of all patients.”

The Honorable Donna Christensen (D-VI) served as the keynote speaker for the event. A physician and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus' Health Braintrust, Representative Christensen spoke about the immediate need for Congress to address the rise of kidney disease

and the importance of educational and awareness programs. With the number of individuals with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) expected to double in the coming years, Representative Christensen shared her commitment to the community to raise awareness about this disease among her colleagues on Capitol Hill.

DPC also recognized its *DPC Heroes*-- individuals who have gone above and beyond to positively impact kidney care in their community. The *DPC Heroes* in attendance were Ed Stizza from Fountain Hills, AZ; Malaysia Scott from Tuscaloosa, AL; Melvin Grayer from Lincoln, NE; and Mickey Sherman from Oklahoma City, OK. Eighty-four year old Mickey Sherman was joined by Debra Sternberg from www.gotswing.com and danced to the Chattanooga Choo-choo.

The Awards Gala was the culmination of a week of advocacy and policy training for 43 kidney patients and their family members. DPC members met with 90 Congressional offices to discuss issues important to kidney patients including the Kidney Care Quality and Education Act (KCQEA). This important piece of bi-partisan legislation establishes patient education and disease management programs to inform patients about how to identify and manage kidney disease and how to prevent kidney failure. Direct patient advocacy is DPC's main tool to achieve its mission of improving the quality of life of dialysis patients.

More than 20 million people are at risk for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). According to the National Kidney Foundation, 1 in 9 Americans suffers from CKD, commonly the result of hypertension or diabetes, which left untreated can progress to kidney failure – or End Stage Renal Disease. More than 400,000 Americans with ESRD must rely on quality dialysis services, or receive a transplant, to live.

Kidneys perform multiple essential functions. When the kidneys fail to function adequately, a replacement therapy must be chosen to sustain life. With appropriate intervention, patients with complete failure of their kidneys can live full, productive lives.

With over 20,000 members, DPC is the nation's largest dialysis patient organization. On a wide variety of issues, DPC seeks to ensure that the patients' point of view is heard and considered by policy makers so that continued progress may be made in the quality of care and life for patients with kidney disease. Additional information on DPC can be found at www.dialysispatients.org.

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