



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 3, 2009**

**FORT LAUDERDALE ENTREPRENUERIAL COUPLE GIFTING HOLIDAY SMILES**

*Collecting 1,000 toys for Big Mama-Team of Life and South Florida children*

FORT LAUDERDALE - The International Holistic Center (IHC) is hosting a toy drive and private holiday party to honor and benefit Big Mama – Team of Life, Inc., a Broward-based nonprofit organization with a mission to serve the County's underprivileged children and families.

The center, which provides integrative and individual services including counseling, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, massage therapy and nutritional counseling, has a goal to collect 1,000 toys from Dec. 1-15. Essie "Big Mama" Reed, throughout Christmas week, will then distribute the toys to Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties, children ages 0-16. Distribution locations have not yet been confirmed.

IHC president and CEO Dr. Elizabeth King, and her husband, John Weaver, Central Beach Alliance board member, have been in support of Big Mama's efforts to serve Broward families for more than 8 years. This is the couple's third year sponsoring the toy drive and hosting a private benefit.

"Big Mama knows the needs of the community better than anyone," said Dr. King. "Her entire life is dedicated to helping others, even if she does not have."

A well-respected powerhouse in South Florida for more than 30 years, Big Mama is no stranger to hard times. Some years ago after losing her home, she and her three sons were forced to live in the family's fish market, then located Northwest 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Northwest 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where they slept on its bare cement floors. When the Reed's situation turned around, Big Mama never forgot the experience.

Beginning Dec. 1, a drop box will be placed in IHC's office, located at 3471 N Federal Hwy., Suite 410, in Fort Lauderdale. New, unwrapped toys can be dropped off Monday thru Saturday. Drop-off times by appointment. Guests at the private party will also donate.

Past supporters of Big Mama's toy drives have included the Miami Dolphins and the Huizenga family. Major donators for this year's event have not yet been disclosed.

"I will always do this because I know what it's like to struggle when you have kids," Big Mama said. "I always try and give the children what they need, what they can't afford."

*For more information about the toy drive, other drop-off locations, Big Mama – Team of Life, or collecting toys in your office or condominium, contact Dr. King at 954-903-9426 or visit IHC's Web site, [www.counselingNwellness.com](http://www.counselingNwellness.com), or Big Mama's Web site, [www.bigmamahelp.com](http://www.bigmamahelp.com).*

**###**