

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 17, 2012

Dr. Elizabeth King
(954) 732-6833 or (954) 903-9426

Community Adopts Big Mama's Holiday Spirit

FORT LAUDERDALE – As proof the entire community is coming together for Essie “Big Mama” Reed and our underprivileged children consider the generosity of Andreas Ioannou, general manager of the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort.

When Mr. Ioannou attended last year’s 10th-annual “Coming Together for Our Youth” Holiday Fundraiser and Toy Drive at the Las Olas Beach Club, he went up to the hosts and said: Next year, why don’t you bring all your Christmas decorations to the Hilton and we’ll host the big event? The hosts, who are John Weaver, president of the Central Beach Alliance, and his wife Dr. Elizabeth King, CEO and founder of the International Holistic Center, happily agreed.

And so on Nov. 30, the 11th-annual holiday event will be held at the luxurious Hilton on Fort Lauderdale beach for all the champions of Big Mama’s mission of serving South Florida’s underprivileged children and families. That means YOU.

“We are more grateful than we can say to the Hilton, Mr. Ioannou and his staff for opening their doors to this important expression of holiday spirit,” said Dr. King. “Big Mama does everything in her power to bring us together for our youth, and we’re showing her that she’s not alone.”

Thirty years ago, when Big Mama started giving food and spiritual guidance to the kids in her neighborhood, she did it all alone. She and her three sons lived in the family’s fish market and slept on bare concrete floors, but even then, she helped others by sharing what little she had.

“I know firsthand what it’s like to have nothing while trying to raise your kids,” Big Mama said. Her work came to the attention of John Weaver and Dr. Elizabeth King and they held the first holiday party to benefit Big Mama’s Team of Life. They started it all by asking relatives and friends to stop by their home and bring a toy for Big Mama instead of a bottle of wine.

From that homespun beginning the event grew by leaps of faith and bounds of generosity until it became what it is today, a major celebration of all that is good and giving in the people of South Florida.

Sponsors of this year’s bash, in addition to the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, are the International Holistic Center, the Women’s International Holistic Council and Portside Realty. More sponsors are needed and would be welcomed. Also, donations of items for a silent auction would be greatly appreciated.

This is going to be fun! The Hilton will provide food, beer and wine and a home for the couple’s Christmas village and 100 Santas. SkinnyGirl will donate the vodka for Mr. Weaver’s and Dr. King’s signature drink, the John-ell-tini (for John and Elizabeth). Leo Casino and his band will provide the music and Nerissa Sparkman Photography will capture the memories.

Volunteers who have already lined up for the event and toy distribution include a group of Broward County public school teachers and members of two organizations, the Women’s International Holistic

Council and the National Association of Women Business Owners. General Motors will be providing vehicles to transport the toys and they are also donating a Cadillac for a week for the silent auction.

Last year's party brought 300 dignitaries, business leaders and community-minded individuals together to collect 2,500 toys and over \$6,000 for the Team of Life. This year's goal is 3,000 toys and \$20,000.

LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR BIG MAMA AND THE KIDS IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY!

WHAT: Big Mama's Holiday Fundraiser and Toy Drive

WHERE: Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, 505 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd.

WHEN: Friday, Nov. 30, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Drop by anytime and stay as long as you wish.

ADMISSION: One unwrapped new toy for ages ranging from infants to 17, and \$15 at the door. Adults Only.

RSVP: www.IHCHealthFusion.com or (954) 903-9426

DROP-OFFS: Until Dec. 15, drop off contributions of toys and money (make checks out to Team of Life Inc.) at the International Holistic Center, 3471 N. Federal Highway, Suite 410, Fort Lauderdale. Please call (954) 903-9426 for hours of operation.