

Celine Dion, Caesars Entertainment and AEG Live Team Up With Children's Hospital Boston to Support "Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit"

Tickets On-Sale Now for January 15 Benefit at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace

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LAS VEGAS, Dec. 5, 2011 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Continuing a long-standing tradition of partnership in giving, Celine Dion, Caesars Entertainment and AEG Live will team up with Children's Hospital Boston to support "Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit" on Jan. 15, 2012.

Doctors affiliated with Children's Hospital Boston are close to discovering life-enhancing therapies to treat sickle cell anemia and are on the cusp of a cure; the aim of the "Play Without Pain" benefit is to raise much needed funds to complete this research as well as increase awareness about the far-reaching impact of sickle cell anemia. The benefit program will include a special presentation of Celine's record-setting show at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace as well as an exclusive reception at PURE Nightclub sponsored by Southern Wine & Spirits following the performance.

"As a mother, I was incredibly moved by the stories that were shared with me regarding the impact this disease has on children," said Dion. "Participating in this benefit is a way in which I can get involved to positively touch these children's lives. The funds we raise will enable doctors to complete their important research that will allow these children to grow up pain-free and lead longer, more productive lives."

Sickle cell disease is a debilitating condition that causes excruciating pain, organ failure, stroke and early death. It is the most common inherited blood disorder in the United States, affecting 100,000 Americans and the number of sufferers is in the millions worldwide. Affected populations are mainly of African descent, but the disease also strikes individuals of Hispanic, Mediterranean and Caribbean heritage. And its treatment is costly: an estimated \$1.1 billion a year in the U.S. alone.

"Even though sickle cell is one of the most common inherited disorders, research on the disease is historically under-funded," said David A. Williams, M.D., Children's Hospital Boston. "This situation is only getting worse as National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding declines – it has been dropping for most categories but particularly for research in childhood diseases since 2003 and the NIH budget now faces substantial legislative cuts. Without the aid of philanthropy, we will be unable to secure the necessary funding that will lead to breakthroughs in treating the disease."

Researchers at Children's Hospital Boston have found a genetic switch that overrides the sickle cell defect and have identified the gene that controls the unhealthy form of hemoglobin, the protein responsible for sickle cell disease. Treatments to flip the switch promise to deliver lifelong relief. The new therapies would turn off the unhealthy form of hemoglobin and turn a healthy form back on. These therapies promise to reverse disease rather than simply treat symptoms.

A study led by Stuart H. Orkin, M.D., published in the Oct. 13, 2011 issue of the world's premier research journal, *Science*, conclusively demonstrated that flipping this switch can correct the disease in mice that have been engineered to carry human forms of sickle cell. The study also illustrates that this approach carries virtually no adverse health effects in an animal model of the disease.

Collaborating with David A. Williams, M.D., Orkin and team have embarked upon a two-pronged strategy to turn this groundbreaking research into a cure. The first strategy is to develop gene therapy to permanently flip the hemoglobin switch and cure sickle cell disease. The second strategy is to find a chemical that can be made into a drug that will boost good hemoglobin levels sufficiently to suppress sickle cell symptoms. The approaches are complementary and, since gene therapy technologies are now established, could lead to clinical trials in the next three years.

"With breakthrough research so close to leading to treatments that will provide relief to millions of people around the globe, there was never a question whether Caesars would join the fight against sickle cell disease," said Gary Loveman, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Caesars Entertainment and a member of Children's Hospital Boston Board of Trustees. "We have a rare opportunity to make a great impact toward funding meaningful and promising research. Our company has a long tradition of giving and we're proud to present the '*Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit*.'"

"*Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit*" will be held Sunday, Jan. 15 at Caesars Palace. The evening will include a special 8:30 p.m. performance of Celine Dion's glamorous show directed by Grammy Awards producer Ken Ehrlich. Featuring a 31-piece orchestra and band, the show includes Celine's biggest hits mixed with timeless classics that pay tribute to some of the most celebrated songs and artists of all time. Following the performance, guests are invited to attend an exclusive reception at PURE Nightclub at Caesars Palace sponsored by Southern Wine & Spirits and Angel Management Group. Guests must be 21 years of age or older to attend the reception.

Tickets for the "*Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit*" range from \$155 to \$350 and are now on-sale at Ticketmaster.com. Tickets may also be purchased at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace Box Office, open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. or may call 877-4-CELINE (423-5463).

Limited space is also available for the "*Play Without Pain: Children's Sickle Cell Benefit*" VIP dinner event at Restaurant Guy Savoy prior to the show. Beginning with a 5 p.m. cocktail reception, guests will be treated to a delightful dinner prepared by the acclaimed French chef as well as the opportunity to meet Celine Dion. For more information on reserving individual seats at this event or for corporate table inquiries, please call 702-731-PLAY or send a message to playwithoutpain@caesars.com.

For additional show and ticket information, visit www.playwithoutpain.org or www.celineinvegas.com, become a fan of [The Colosseum on Facebook](#) or follow updates from [The Colosseum on Twitter](#).

Suggested Tweet: Join #CelineDion in the fight against #SickleCell at #PlayWithoutPain benefit @CaesarsPalace 1/15. Tickets on-sale now at Ticketmaster.com

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