

Philanthropist Darlene Shiley Among Star Cast in San Diego Performance of *Surviving Grace*



Shiley

A star cast – including San Diego philanthropist Darlene Shiley, actress Marilu Henner and singer Helen Reddy – will take the stage Sept. 27 for a special ensemble reading of Act 1 of *Surviving Grace*. The original play is penned by comedy writer Trish Vradenburg (“Designing Women,” “Family Ties,” “Kate and Allie”), and co-founder of USAgainstAlzheimer’s, a national advocacy organization committed to stopping Alzheimer’s by 2020.

Proceeds from the performance benefit the UC San Diego Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center and WomenAgainst Alzheimer’s – the first national network of women in leadership positions working to speed the pace of research and build momentum to end Alzheimer’s disease.

“Through my past experiences as a caregiver for my mother, uncle and aunt with Alzheimer’s, I’ve seen firsthand that Alzheimer’s is a disease that will stop at nothing to take things – moments, memories and loved ones – away,” Shiley said.

“However, Alzheimer’s advocates remain driven by the knowledge that with the proper resources we can stop this disease and spare future generations from it.”

UC San Diego announced a pledge from Donald and Darlene Shiley in 2004 to support the Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (ADRC). In recognition of their generous gift and in honor of Darlene’s mother, Dee Marcos, the ADRC was renamed the [Shiley-Marcos ADRC \(PDF\)](#).

Surviving Grace is a brutally honest, irreverent and moving story – laced with humor – that sheds light on the emotional ups and downs that 15.4 million Alzheimer’s caregivers in the United States go through each day. The play, which is based on Vradenburg’s experience as a caregiver to her mother

who died of Alzheimer's in 1992, will arrive in San Diego following a star-studded reading earlier in the week in Los Angeles. It also has also been produced at The Kennedy Center and off-Broadway, among other places.

"I thought my mom was invincible, but she was no match for Alzheimer's. I watched helplessly as her mind, her dignity, and finally her body vanished into the unforgiving chasm of Alzheimer's," said Vradenburg. "So why a serious play with a large dose of humor? Because that's how I survive life – if you don't laugh, you'll cry," she said. "We have to bring this disease out of the shadows and into the spotlight; that is why I wrote *Surviving Grace* and why I'm excited to be sharing it during this special event."

Surviving Grace will take place at Shiley Theatre on the campus of the University of San Diego. Additional cast members include including Diane Rehm, Susan Taylor, Robert Foxworth and Jim Laslavic. It is presented by USAgainstAlzheimer's, which is mobilizing individual, political, business and civic leaders to achieve the goal of ending Alzheimer's by 2020, and B.A.B.E.S "Beating Alzheimer's By Embracing Science," an organization dedicated to harnessing the power of women to beat Alzheimer's by raising funds to support the most promising Alzheimer's research.

The evening will begin with a reception at 6 p.m., followed by the play reading at 6:45 p.m., and dinner with the cast at 8:30 p.m. To purchase tickets in visit: www.survivinggrace.org/show/sandiego.

Alzheimer's affects one in three seniors, and is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. The number of Americans with the disease is projected to triple by 2050 – from 5.4 million to nearly 16 million – unless we find a treatment or cure, and ten percent of victims are between the ages of 40 and 65. Alzheimer's also has a disproportionate impact on women, who represent nearly two-thirds of Americans with the disease and 70 percent of caregivers.

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