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CITIZENS INTERESTED IN ARTS
KEEPING ARTS ALIVE IN SOUTH FLORIDA

Contact: Patty Soffer
Tel: 305.933.8800
Cell: 305.785.3418
E: creative@cia4arts.org

SONIA TITA PUOPOLO, AUTHOR OF *SONIA'S RING: 11 WAYS TO HEAL YOUR HEART*, TO BE HONORED AS 2012 CHAMPION OF THE ARTS BY CITIZENS INTERESTED IN ARTS, INC. (CIA), WITH PR POWERHOUSE TARA SOLOMON AS HONORARY CHAIRPERSON

Miami, FL— Out of the rubble of September 11, 2001, a lone voice emerged that was calling for love instead of hatred; compassion instead of blame; forgiveness instead of resentment. How could this be? Sonia Tita Puopolo had lost her beloved mother that awful day, her namesake who was sitting two seats away from Mohammad Atta on American Flight 11 from Boston. It was the first plane to hit the World Trade Center, the first symbol that evil had arrived. How, then, could she see light where there was none?

Sonia's mother's body was never found, but some remains were discovered 11 months after the disaster. Sonia's father's tearful wish that he could once again hold the ring he had given his wife of 40 years was answered. Her mother's wedding band was recovered completely intact, still on her mother's left hand, amid tons of rubble at the World Trade Center. It was a miracle.

Everything about 2012's *Champion of the Arts* Sonia Tita Puopolo's story is a miracle. Her losses are incalculable —the horror of a mother gone, trust shattered, crippling fear and incredible anger. Yes, they found her mother's hand, but perhaps the ultimate miracle is that, with the passage of time and much soul searching, Sonia once again found what her mother had instilled in her: To heal, your heart must be filled with love. She took an event that would harden the strongest of hearts and used it to inspire others. Her book, *Sonia's Ring: 11 Ways to Heal Your Heart*, was released in September



Sonia Tita Puopolo



Tara Solomon



Michele Gillen

2010 and the Spanish-language version, *El Anillo De Sonia: 11 Maneras De Sanar Su Corazon* was launched September 2011. With it, Sonia has taken her message that *Love Never Dies* out into the world, appearing on Ellen, CNN, MSNBC, WFOR/CBSMiami, Al Rojo Vivo, Primer Impacto/Univision and more.

"We are honored that Sonia Tita is our Champion of the Arts honoree," says CIA President Stuart Geller. "When we heard her story, we were amazed that though her loss was so great, she gives so much. This is the epitome of philanthropy. In her honor, our theme is

Love and inspiration Through the Arts.

Ms. Puopolo will be joined by public relations dynamo Tara Solomon, who has been named 2012 *Champion of the Arts Honorary Chairperson*. Ms. Solomon, *The Miami Herald's* former "Queen of the Night" columnist who now has a thriving public relations firm, TARA, Ink., with offices nationwide, has made headlines for herself and others for decades. Her historic contributions to the development of South Beach as a destination par excellence, along

with her impact on South Florida's fashion and celebrity scene, have been central to the evolution and elevation of Miami from a sleepy beach town to an international city.

Emcee for the event is Michele Gillen, Chief Investigative Reporter at WFOR-TV, Miami, Florida. Gillen is the recipient of 30 National Academy of Television Arts and Science (NATAS) Regional Emmy awards, the Columbia DuPont Silver Baton, the Edward R. Murrow Award for Investigative Reporting and three Green Eyeshade Awards. She introduced South Florida to Sonia's story in her on-air piece, *Daughter of 9/11 Victim Spreads Message of Hope*.

Patty Soffer, Chairperson of the *Champion of the Arts* initiative, believes these women represent the best expression of CIA. "We exist solely to provide grants to qualified members of the South Florida arts community," she says. "Sonia, Tara and Michele are artistic, humanitarian leaders. What better role models are there to represent CIA to our grantees?"

The Champion of the Arts Luncheon Gala will be held on March 22, 2012 at the Fontainebleau Hotel. Reservations are \$100. Sponsorship and underwriting opportunities are available. Please visit cia4arts.org for more information including registration and payment. If paying by check, please make payable to Citizens Interested in Arts, Inc., PO Box 630356, Miami, FL 33163.

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