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Contact:
Virginia Garcia Memorial Foundation
Kasi Woidyla, Public Relations Officer
503-352-8612
kwoidyla@vgmhc.org

***PRESS ADVISORY***

11th ANNUAL VIRGINIA GARCIA HEALTH CARE SYMPOSIUM
VICARIOUS TRAUMA
CARING FOR THOSE ON THE FRONT LINE OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Hillsboro, OR --

Mary Sepulveda never thought she would feel fortunate for getting sick. “It sounds strange to say,” she said, “but getting sick saved my life.”

Mary started her career with Virginia Garcia at the Beaverton Clinic as a Health Resilience Specialist. Her day consisted of working with patients who had either experienced trauma, or were currently experiencing it. She provided support and resources to individuals with complex medical, mental health and social needs. She helped patients navigate the criminal justice or social security system and often advocated for patients with insurance companies. On a daily basis she was working to find housing, social supports, substance treatments and myriad of other basic needs for Virginia Garcia patients that had nowhere else to turn or ask for help.

She often left work after a long day feeling defeated or frustrated, knowing that a patient was spending another night without shelter because she couldn’t find them a place to stay or a family was going hungry again because she had not been able to get the support they needed. “I was paid for an eight hour day, but the reality was the work never ended and was always on my mind,” she said. “I felt exhausted and often helpless in the face of the maze of systems we had to navigate. Then I got sick.”

“Sick” came in the form of Stage 4 breast cancer. Treatment took the form of long-term chemo and surgery. In order to keep her insurance, she kept working but she came to a very quick realization. The stress from carrying the worry of all those she was helping each day had taken its toll on her body. “I realized that if I wanted to continue to do the work and support others, I must strive to build systems that support ways to manage the job-related stress,” she said. “When someone puts their health second it is not sustainable over the long haul. We have to create mindful ways to take care of others while still taking care of ourselves.”

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky couldn’t agree more.
Laura van Dernoot Lipsky is the founder and director of The Trauma Stewardship Institute and author of *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* and *The Age of Overwhelm*. Widely recognized as a pioneer in the field of trauma exposure, she has worked locally, nationally, and internationally for more than three decades.

A decade into her career, Laura experienced what can best be described as a near-psychotic break—which, she came to realize, was the result of years of witnessing and being intimately involved in trauma while lacking insight into how to sustain herself amidst such conditions. She began a journey of inquiry into the lasting effects on both individuals and communities of exposure to the suffering, hardship, crisis, or trauma endured by humans, other living beings, or the planet itself.

Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center will welcome Laura on Monday, May 13 at 5:30pm at the OHSU Robertson Life Sciences Building.

Limited tickets are available to both a “Meet the Author” pre-event as well as the symposium at virginagarcia.org/hcs2019.

To obtain a press pass or schedule an opportunity to interview Mary or Laura, please contact Kasi Woidyla.

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*Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center provides high quality, comprehensive and culturally appropriate primary health care with a special emphasis on those with barriers to receiving health care. Since its founding 43 years ago, Virginia Garcia has grown from a single, grassroots clinic into a full service health care home serving Washington and Yamhill counties. Today, Virginia Garcia employs nearly 650 people, has a budget of more than $62 million, and serves about 48,700 patients at five primary care clinics, six dental clinics, six school-based health centers, a women’s clinic as well as a mobile outreach clinic.*

*Visit [www.virginiagarcia.org](http://www.virginiagarcia.org) for more information on the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center.*