

Response to 7.09.09 SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Press Release
By the Megan Haven

GENERAL HOSPITAL RATINGS DECLINE TO A NEW LOW
ABC Daytime TV Rejects Viewers' Requests for Greater Integrity and Less Sleaze

The SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign is a coordinated response by a diverse group of fans that are upset with the direction General Hospital (GH) has taken. These fans are fed up with unbalanced storylines, character destruction, promotion of excessively immoral/detrimental ideals and behaviors, underutilization of long-term and/or well-liked characters while constantly introducing new and unpopular characters, and the absence of long-term romantic pairings and solid familial interactions. These are common complaints shared by many long-term fans of the show, regardless of their preferred pairings or characters. **Fans of Megan Ward (Kate Howard) are no exception.**

Megan Ward, a newcomer to daytime with a lengthy movie and prime-time television resume, joined GH as Kate Howard in May of 2007. The role could have been temporary, but Kate was an instant hit with the GH audience. Ms. Ward appeared in the Top Five Actresses poll in *ABC Soaps in Depth* (ABC publication) within months of her GH debut. *ABC Soaps in Depth* also recognized her twice by giving her a Gold Star for her work on GH. Ms. Ward quickly developed a strong fanbase; her first fan event sold out and more than 50 tickets to her second fan event were purchased within 48 hours. In addition to support from viewers, Ms. Ward's work has been recognized by her fellow cast-members. She received a lead actress Emmy pre-nom for her work on GH in 2007. **Co-star Maurice Benard (Sonny) often publicly complimented her, one time stating, "It's been a nice growing experience working with her, and from day one, I've loved it."**

When Kate Howard was shot at the altar on her wedding day in September 2008, fans were thrilled at the long-term storyline potential surrounding her shooting and the recent introduction of a family member for Kate. Fans believed these stories would provide Megan Ward with quality material that would allow her to display her talent, while giving the character of Kate Howard more depth and offering the audience insight into Kate's mysterious past. Instead, viewers received no payoff after months of waiting to find out more about Kate's history.

As time went on, not only did the popular pairing of Kate and Sonny end, but Ms. Ward's airtime greatly diminished and Kate's character was repeatedly undermined and attacked. To make matters worse, there were extensive changes to the timeline and to the backstory that had been established for Kate up until that point. The historical integrity of Kate's backstory was damaged to accommodate two newer characters' whose introductions were met with predominately negative responses from the show's viewers, as well as critics in various forms of media, including soap magazines and online blogs.

Without regard to the preferences of the audience or the best interests of GH, Megan Ward lost her contract and was placed on recurring status, leaving fans concerned about her future with the show. Ms. Ward has been an incredible asset to GH, and the character of Kate Howard is sorely missed from the canvas. Kate Howard is a unique character compared to many of the female characters GH has chosen to showcase in recent months. She's a successful, independent, intelligent woman who works hard and has strong values. Kate is a classic soap heroine; she isn't without imperfections, but deep down she is a good and loving person. Women like Kate are noticeably under-represented on GH, while vile, promiscuous, selfish, and immoral women in sleazier storylines appear on-screen on a daily basis.

The loss of viewership, which has occurred since Megan Ward and her character Kate Howard disappeared from the canvas this year, has been staggering. While the popular pairing of Sonny and Kate was broken up in late 2008, Kate Howard remained on the canvas and in the main Sonny and Claudia story through the end of February. Throughout January and February of 2009, ratings held up, although they were lower than the ratings that Sonny and Kate achieved in 2008.

As reported by A.C. Nieslen, the ratings deteriorated as Kate Howard was removed from the canvas follows below:

Daily HH Ratings (% of Total)					
MEGAN WARD ON GH CANVAS	OVER 2.0	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7 AND UNDER
January 2009	85 %	5%	5%	5%	0
February 2009	70 %	25%	5%	0	0
MEGAN WARD OFF GH CANVAS					
March 2009	32%	41%	22%	5%	0
April 2009	9%	36%	36%	9%	5%
May 2009	0	45%	35%	20%	0
June 2009	0	18%	27%	27%	27%
July 2009 (2 days)	0	0	0	50%	50%

Guiding Light's cancellation, which occurred when the HH rating was 1.6, is a disturbing reminder that cancellation can also happen to GH, which had remained consistently one of the top-watched soap operas until a few months ago. Other soaps, such as Days of Our Lives the Young & the Restless, have shown that numbers can increase when efforts are made to improve writing and maintain integrity in the writing.

The time has come for those in charge at GH to reassess all levels of production of this once great soap opera. It is crucial for those who run GH to acknowledge what viewers want to see: talented performers, beautiful romances, consistency in storytelling, and characters that the audience can root for. Mark Teschner, the three time Emmy winning casting director at GH, understands the importance of Megan Ward to the GH canvas. In May of 2009 he was quoted, "Megan...she's an impressive, complex woman...Megan has a very different flavor than anyone on the show and I think the canvas of the show has to have that kind of range." Clearly, Mr. Teschner is correct and viewers agree with him, given the collapse in GH ratings. **Changes need to happen NOW before it is too late.**

Members of The Megan Haven, a message board for Megan Ward fans, are in full support of the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign. It is not too late for GH to make positive changes. Fans are uniting to bring awareness to what needs to be done in order to save the show! Placing Megan Ward back on contract, getting her back on-screen, and providing quality material would be a terrific place to start!

For more information, please contact Sarah Poisel or Laurie Smith, Admins of the Megan Haven, at admin@meganhaven.com or via <http://www.meganhaven.com>.