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For Immediate Release:

**Alliance Healthcare Foundation Partners With Government Agencies to Bring Attention to Mental Illness in San Diego**

**San Diego, CA—October 12, 2009**—Alliance Healthcare Foundation (AHF) is taking direct steps to reduce the stigma of mental illness in San Diego. AHF, The County of San Diego Mental Health Services and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors are making this issue a top priority, with innovative programs slated for the upcoming year. As part of this effort, AHF is partnering with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA) for the 2009 Voice Awards.

The Voice Awards will honor writers and producers who have incorporated dignified, respectful, and accurate portrayals of people with mental illness into their film and television productions. Hosted by Academy Award-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss, the ceremony will take place October 14<sup>th</sup> at Paramount Studios. Nominees include, *The Soloist*, *Michael Clayton*, *Lars and the Real Girl*, "90210," "Grey's Anatomy," and "United States of Tara." Five-time Academy Award nominee Glenn Close and several mental health consumer leaders will also be honored for their work in educating the public about the impact of mental illness and showing the possibilities for recovery.

California counties are also at the forefront in the fight against stigma, and support AHF's mission to improve the health and well-being of their residents. In San Diego County, more than 244,000 residents currently live with mental illness and serious emotional/behavioral disorders.<sup>1</sup> The growing recognition that the negative stigmas surrounding mental illness prevent people with associated conditions from seeking treatment and impede necessary improvements in care and understanding, make this issue critical for the San Diego community.

This understanding is reflected in the County of San Diego Mental Health Services' strategic priorities, which will focus on reducing the negative manifestations of stigma that can produce disgrace and shame

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<sup>1</sup> According to NAMI San Diego

in people confronting mental illness and misunderstanding in their communities. In addition to several targeted initiatives that aim to enhance the quality of life for people with mental illness, like a permanent supportive housing initiative, the County of San Diego Mental Health Services will implement a robust media and public education campaign that aims to widely reduce stigma and improve understanding of mental illness among all San Diegans, including culturally diverse populations. Funds for this campaign come from the Mental Health Services Act, approved by California voters in 2004.

In conjunction with the broader efforts of the County, Supervisor Pam Slater-Price will spearhead several new mental health programs, leading the County Board of Supervisors to enhance integrated care for San Diegans. “Removing the stigma of mental illness is absolutely essential to ensuring that our communities receive the total health care they need to live quality, healthy lives,” said Supervisor Slater-Price. AHF will partner with Supervisor Slater-Price and the County of San Diego on these important initiatives.

AHF, the County of San Diego Mental Health Services, and San Diego County Board of Supervisors are committed to improving mental health education, understanding, and care. Alliance Healthcare Foundation’s CEO, Karma Bass, acknowledges the challenges ahead. “We are not saying that destigmatizing mental illness alone will solve all the problems of our mental health care system. But it is the first, necessary step to having an honest conversation about the current state of care and the real toll mental illness takes on communities, families, and individuals.”

### **About Alliance Healthcare Foundation**

Alliance Healthcare Foundation is the only local foundation focused exclusively on healthcare in the greater San Diego region. AHF seeks to improve access to healthcare for the area’s medically underserved through collaborative grantmaking, advocacy, and education.

**Visit Alliance Healthcare Foundation at [www.alliancehf.org](http://www.alliancehf.org)**

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