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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



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**2008 San Diego County NAMI Walk dedicated to activist Shannon Jaccard
and her late brother, Jeff**

SAN DIEGO – Shannon Jaccard is not only the Walk Manager and the Communications Director at NAMI San Diego (National Alliance on Mental Illness), she is also a loving, caring sister to a young man with schizophrenia who died last Friday night in a hospital where he was being treated for his mental illness. NAMI will be dedicating the upcoming 2008 NAMI Walk to Shannon, the vital work she does and the memory of her brother, Jeff Christopher.

The 2008 2/5K NAMI Walk/Run in San Diego will be held next Saturday, April 19 at Balboa Park. It is the organization's biggest fundraiser, and is actually held nationwide to raise money and awareness about our country's need for a world-class treatment and recovery system for people with mental illnesses.

Shannon's story about her brother is endearing, if not tragic. In an open letter to the public about why she walks and works with NAMI, she recently wrote: "He is my brother and only sibling. Growing up, I am the one who taught him to ride a bike, tie his shoe, and shield him from monsters in his closet. Of course we had the normal sibling rivalry but we were each other's companions."

"Years (later) his brain started to struggle. For the past six years, we have fought hard with many barriers to help him recover. One of the biggest barriers is the lack of education in the community on mental illness, which is one of the main missions of NAMI and the reason we as a family support this cause. My brother has to be one of the bravest persons I know. Each day he fights to fit in, to understand what is happening to him, and to overcome the loss he has experienced due to his illness, as does the rest of my family." This was written prior to Jeff's death on Friday, April 11, 2008.

Jeff was not alone in his struggle. To put it in perspective, more than 244,000 people are living with mental illness in San Diego alone. In the state of California, 600,000 children, adults and elderly are in need of mental health services that aren't readily available. In our nation, one in five people will suffer from a serious mental illness in their lifetime.

Your participation in the walk can help the many who are in desperate need of diagnosis and care. NAMI San Diego is our city's own voice on mental illness. Your support shines a light on the stigma attached to mental illness — a stigma that comes from fear due to lack of knowledge. NAMI is at the center of education, support and advocacy regarding these brain disorders.

San Diego County NAMI Walk will feature Channel 10's Geni Cavitt as the Honorary Chair of the walk. Geni does the weather and other special reports on KGTV and is known throughout the city as the one who presents the prestigious Channel 10 Leadership Award.

Shannon Jaccard was a recipient of the 10 Leadership Award in September, 2007. A volunteer from another organization Shannon works tirelessly for - Compeer San Diego - nominated her for the award.

Compeer San Diego is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing friendship, support and advocating for those dealing with a mental illness. This is a national organization with a local affiliate in San Diego established by Shannon, who, again, was inspired by her brother to do so.

NAMI in San Diego County asks you to walk with them in honor of Shannon, Jeff and all those affected somehow by mental illness, which, in reality, is every one of us.

The walk will include music, entertainment, a health/resource fair and a chance to make a difference one step at a time. For more information on how to sign up for the walk and form or join a walk team, go to www.namiwalksandiego.org or call NAMI San Diego at (619) 584-5564.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services and advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses. Visit www.namisandiego.org or call 619-543-1434 or 1-800-523-5933.

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