

March 5, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



Contact:
Shannon Jaccard, M.B.A.
Communications Director
San Diego County NAMI Walk Manager
(858) 361-3632
shannonjaccard@namisd.org
www.namiwalksandiego.org

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS
TO KICK-OFF ANNUAL 5K WALK/RUN**

***United Behavioral Health is Lead Sponsor as Part of its Commitment to
Help People With Mental Illness Reach Recovery and Resiliency***

SAN DIEGO – The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) announced today that its annual NAMI 5K WALK/Run will be held on Saturday, April 18, 2009 in Balboa Park to raise funding for programs that help people with mental illness.

A kick-off party will be held on Saturday, March 7 at St. David’s Episcopal Church, 5050 Milton Street, San Diego, from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Plan on a free brunch, team T-shirt fashion show and complete instructions on how to form a team and do individual fundraising for April’s big walk.

“In 2009, thousands of concerned citizens in more than 80 communities across the nation will join the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Campaign for the Mind of America,” said Bettie Reinhardt, Executive Director, NAMI San Diego. “San Diego will take part in the campaign by walking together to raise money and awareness about our country’s need for a world-class treatment and recovery system for people with mental illnesses.”

In San Diego County, more than 500,000 people are living with mental illness. Nationally, one in five people will suffer from a serious mental illness in their lifetime. With the economic downturn, symptoms and manifestations of the mental health crisis are worsening and affecting many of us. Today NAMI’s no-cost services are needed more than ever.

United Behavioral Health, a company that is part of Golden Valley, Minn.-based OptumHealth (a UnitedHealth Group company), is the lead sponsor for the event. United Behavioral Health’s public sector division is the Administrative Service Organization for the County of San Diego Mental Health System. They operate the Access and Crisis Line, offering referral to mental health and alcohol and drug treatment providers, and crisis intervention 24/7. UBH also operates the U.S. Behavioral Health Plan of California, a specialty behavioral health plan that serves more than two million members throughout San Diego and California.

“As a community partner, United Behavioral Health’s public sector is committed to supporting critical groups like the National Alliance on Mental Illness who provide needed advocacy and support to individuals and their families coping with mental illness,” said Ruth Kenzelmann, Ph.D., United Behavioral Health’s San Diego public sector executive director and this year’s Business Team Chair of the NAMI WALK. “Recovery from mental illness is possible with treatment and support, and United Behavioral Health is proud to be part of solutions that help people get and stay healthy.”

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

Mark Saturday, April 18 at 8:00 a.m. on your calendar as the day to make a difference with your feet! Sign up for the San Diego County NAMI Walk today. There will be music, entertainment, and a health/resource fair.

For more information, go to www.namiwalksandiego.org or call (619) 584-5564 today!
