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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Kick-off Party for NAMI San Diego Annual 5K Walk to be held on February 20

SAN DIEGO – Calling all walkers! The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI San Diego) is gearing up for their annual walk this spring at a kick-off party on February 20 and wants you there.

While the walk won't happen until April 17 in Balboa Park, the kick-off brunch and festivities will be held at St. David's Episcopal Church, 5050 Milton Street, San Diego, 92110, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday, February 20. NAMI San Diego encourages walkers, sponsors, team captains, and anyone interested in the walk to participate in the kick-off party. Be prepared to join in the fun with some NAMI trivia, fashion show, games, food, and much more. If you have participated in a NAMI Walk before and have a team T-shirt, please be sure to wear it for the fashion show.

Some special walkers from last year will be recognized at the kick-off party. These include:

- Largest WALK Team—"Walk the Talk" from United Behavioral Health with 176 members
- Largest Amount Raised (Team)—"North Coast Beachwalkers," \$4,345, NAMI North Coastal San Diego County
- Largest Amount Raised (Individual)—Bettie Reinhardt, \$1,795
- NEW this year: Team with the greatest increase in walkers from 08 to 09—"Psyched @ CSUSM," 13 walkers in 2008 to 30 walkers in 2009

The kick-off party is a great place to sign up for the walk, learn about fundraising ideas and team recruitment, and just enjoy the camaraderie.

In 2009 NAMI walkers helped raise financial support to augment NAMI San Diego County's family, teen and corporate outreach services and programs. These include support groups, educational classes, newsletters, and the helpline. With the recession deepening, mental illness symptoms are on the rise and the no-cost services of NAMI San Diego are needed more than ever before. The NAMI WALK is the organization's biggest fundraiser and the goal for the 2010 walk is 3,000 walkers, 100 teams and \$250,000 raised for programs geared towards servicing the San Diego community.

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. The NAMI WALK not only raises money to help address mental illness in our city, but is also a huge stigma-buster of a disease that is widely misunderstood. Those who experience mental illness are often

feared, shunned or marginalized in society, but this walk brings hope, healing and understanding as thousands gather together to make a statement with their feet and their hearts at the walk on Saturday, April 17 in Balboa Park.

San Diego City Councilmember Marti Emerald will be the Honorary Chair at the NAMI 5K WALK. Marti Emerald is the Councilmember for District 7 in San Diego. Ms. Emerald excelled as a broadcast journalist for 30 years before taking the oath of office for the San Diego City Council in 2008. The Goddard Brothers Band will be providing entertainment on the stage after the walk, and there will be food vendors, children's activities and a health resource fair at the event as well.

There is no fee to participate in the walk. NAMI in San Diego County simply asks that you raise money for it through sponsorships and donations as you can. To register online, please visit www.namiwalksandiego.org. For offline help, call NAMI San Diego at (619) 584-5564.

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