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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**



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**Remarkable and inspirational author Elyn Saks to be keynote speaker for NAMI San Diego Awards dinner on Oct. 2**

SAN DIEGO—She went to Harvard, to Yale and now is a professor of law and psychology at USC and did it all while suffering from a serious mental illness. Now the inspirational Elyn Saks will be the keynote speaker for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI San Diego) 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Inspiration Awards Dinner on Oct. 2, 2009.

Saks has written a number of books and articles on her personal journey with schizophrenia including The center cannot hold: my journey through madness. Her memoir describes her often frightening experiences that have led to her advocacy of mental patients' civil rights as they confront compulsory medication, civil commitment, the abuse of restraints and the absurdities of the mental care system. She will be holding a book signing at the NAMI dinner.

As expressed in Saks' work, those with mental illness are not inherently different from any of us. Schizophrenia favors no intellectual or social class; it can strike anyone regardless of age, race, religion or income. As a book reviewer put it. "Saks sheds light on the ways in which schizophrenia afflicts young men and women, robbing them of everything that they need to take their place in society: an education, normal relationships, and a profession. Unfortunately, most schizophrenics do not have Elyn Saks's intellectual, emotional, and financial resources, nor do they have her strong support system. However, with ongoing research and more effective drug treatments being devised every year, there is hope that this heartening success story will someday be the norm, not the exception."

To put it in a more local 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.

NAMI is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services and

advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses, which, really, is all of us in one way or another. The annual Inspiration Awards dinner is one of their largest fundraisers and proceeds from it enable NAMI San Diego to continue doing the important work it does.

The dinner, to be held at the Catamaran Resort in Mission Beach, will also recognize local individuals whose work within the mental health community has been an outstanding contribution to recovery and hope in San Diego. The selection process for these awardees is currently underway.

In addition, a NAMI San Diego short documentary entitled *Five Faces of Hope* will debut at the dinner. This locally produced film will feature five San Diegans living inspirational lives while experiencing mental illness.

Please don't miss this exciting evening. Invitations will be sent out soon, so mark Friday, Oct. 2 on your calendar. For more information, contact NAMI San Diego at (800) 523-5933. Or visit [www.namisandiego.org](http://www.namisandiego.org)

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