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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Get out your sneakers—the NAMI Walk is Saturday, April 17**

SAN DIEGO— Saturday is the day, Balboa Park is the place, a 5K walk is the event, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the cause.

Yes, it's time once again for the annual San Diego County NAMI Walk for the Mind of America. This year's walk will be held at 8:00 a.m. on April 17 at Balboa Park (corner of Quince and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and everyone is welcome to attend. The walk is free to participate in, but donations are always welcome. There will be a number of activities during and after the walk as well, including entertainment by the Goddard Brothers band and Don Lee, a health resource fair with 60 different booths, a children's game area, and BnB Kettle Corn and the Sweet Treats truck.

NAMI is a grassroots organization that supports people who experience mental illnesses, and their family and friends, in their struggle towards improved mental health. The annual walk is the organization's biggest fundraiser. Financial support that NAMI receives from the walk is used for its programs that increase mental health recovery and reduce stigma.

Last year 2,000 NAMI walkers helped raise money 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 goal for the 2010 walk is 3,000 walkers, 100 teams and \$150,000 raised for programs geared towards servicing the San Diego community. So far, the numbers are: 95 teams and \$75,000 raised.

The NAMI Walk has some overseas participation too this year. Forward Operating Base Echo, Iraq will be holding their own version of the NAMI Walk at the same time NAMI San Diego begins their 5K—that's 8 a.m. San Diego time, 1900 hours in Iraq. While most San Diego walkers will be strolling through Balboa Park at a leisurely pace, the military version will be running their own course in full body armor.

NAMI San Diego Development and Events Manager, Annie Dunlop, has told her friend, John Bell, who is in the U.S. Military, about the NAMI Walk for years. For the past two years, John has been deployed in Iraq and unable to attend the San Diego County NAMI Walk. This year, however, John decided he wasn't going to miss out, so he has organized a 5K run to be held in honor of NAMI San Diego and the NAMI programs designed to help veterans such as the Veterans Resource Center, an online portal to mental health resources for America's veterans, active duty service members, and their families.

NAMI San Diego is grateful for the troops' support of their walk and will certainly be thinking of these men and women while hitting the pavement on home turf at Balboa Park that morning.

If you would like more information on how to join the NAMI Walk in San Diego, simply go to [www.namiwalksandiego.org](http://www.namiwalksandiego.org) or call (619) 398-9854. Or if you are interested in supporting the NAMI run in Iraq, please log onto [www.nami.org/namiwalks10/SDC/JohnBell](http://www.nami.org/namiwalks10/SDC/JohnBell)

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