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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Thousands participate in San Diego County NAMI Walk

SAN DIEGO – People from all walks of life and stages of recovery came together last Saturday to celebrate hope for all those affected by mental illness at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) San Diego County NAMI Walk in Balboa Park.

“Raising funds to provide free mental health services countywide is no easy task but with a dedicated walk committee, more than 60 walk volunteers, community support, and involved staff, board members and affiliates, the San Diego County NAMI Walk raised over \$120,000 and counting!” said Annie Dunlop, NAMI Walk Manager. The walk continues to take in donations that support mental health services countywide until June 17, 2011. The money raised will augment NAMI San Diego County’s family and corporate outreach services and programs. These include support groups, educational classes, newsletters, and the helpline.

“We showed our collaborative spirit through the use of person-first language, a resource fair with over 70 community service agencies, and walking together as an entire San Diego County community to take a stand against the stigma associated with mental illness,” said Dunlop. There were approximately 3,000 walkers marching through Balboa Park on April 16, many holding team signs to rally for the cause.

To put it in perspective, approximately 750,000 people in San Diego County experience a mental health challenge. That's enough people to fill Qualcomm stadium ten times. In the United States, one in four adults, approximately 57.7 million people, experience mental illness. One in five children and adolescents have a mental health need. Half of all mental illnesses begin by age 14, three-quarters begin by age 24.

The San Diego County NAMI WALK not only raises money to help address mental illness in our county, 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 gathered together to make a statement with their feet and their hearts.

A number of local organizations helped make this walk possible. Some of these sponsors include: OptumHealth, US Behavioral Health Plan, Union Bank, Eli Lilly and Company, Paradise Valley Hospital, Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital, O'Reilly Kragen Auto and Telecare Corporation.

For more information on NAMI San Diego services or to make a donation,, call (619) 543-1434 or visit www.namisandiego.org

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