

## NEWS RELEASE

### **RECOVERY HAPPENS 2002 JOIN THE VOICES OF RECOVERY**

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### **OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS JOIN IN SUPPORT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT**

People living productive, satisfying lives as a result of having recovered from the disease of alcohol and drug addiction celebrated **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month** today. Also joining them were those who, in professional or personal capacities, support the recovery process. Public officials, community leaders, health executives, friends and families, recovered alcoholics and addicts came together at the Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park for a day of celebration amidst bands, choirs and other entertainment. In keeping with this year's theme "**Join the Voices of Recovery: A Call to Action**", San Diego officials and community leaders called upon every person to recognize that recovery works and stressed the importance of making more treatment available.

Since problem drinking and drug use are linked to traffic crashes, home and industrial accidents, medical problems, scholastic failures, crime and family problems, recovery from addiction reduces the incidence of these problems. Lori Pfeiler, Mayor of Escondido, told the audience that she and other Escondido City officials support alcohol and drug treatment programs. "*Because we have confidence in what these treatment programs do, we can say to our citizens that we want people to be able to change their lives and have a place in our city to do that. We also know what good neighbors and community assets recovery programs are,*" said Pfeiler.

In the past, alcohol and other drug dependence has been treated as though it were an illness that should be "cured" overnight. More often than not, this unrealistic expectation is not met. However, when addiction is treated as the more long-term, chronic, relapsing illness it really is, success rates are comparable to those associated with treating other chronic problems, such as hypertension, diabetes, and asthma.

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Treatment for addiction is as effective as treatment for other chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, yet only 20 percent of the people in the U.S. who need treatment are receiving it.

Addiction wasn't declared a disease until the 1950s. Diseases or other medical conditions new on the scene, or those for which a complete cure is not yet known, often carry stigmas for some time. Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) was started in 1935 in Akron, Ohio by a stockbroker and a physician who wanted to do something about their drinking problem. *"Recovery does happen, as evidenced by the 1.2 million members of AA in the United States, and another million in other countries,"* said Ray DiCiccio, Director, Policy Panel, SDSU Foundation, Combating Underage Drinking. Stigma is the root of impediments to policies and practices that could increase opportunities for recovery. While San Diego treatment providers attempt to expand to accommodate an intense client load, not in my backyard (NIMBY) has often been the response from citizens and decision-makers alike.

The Honorable James R. Milliken, Presiding Judge of the San Diego Juvenile Court who was a prime driver behind the drug court development in San Diego County said, *"Early on it occurred to me that we were requiring our drug court participants to cross bridges that weren't even built yet. There was then, and still is, a lack of treatment beds available in this county. Many of us have worked hard to help build those bridges in San Diego communities, and now we need the support of every person in San Diego."*

Substance use and abuse is a major public health problem affecting millions of American in all of our communities. The cost of untreated drug and alcohol addiction in the U.S. is estimated at \$276 billion per year in lost productivity, law enforcement, health care, justice, welfare and other programs and services. That's \$1,050 for every man, woman, and child in America. In contrast, only about \$45 per year per each American would provide the services needed to effectively treat addictive disorders.

Al Medina, Administrator, Alcohol and Drug Services, County of San Diego, said, *"The medical, societal, and economic costs to San Diego have reached over two billion dollars. For every one of those dollars spent on treatment, \$4-7 is saved healthcare and other public agency costs. The return on investment in terms of restored lives is incalculable. Recovery is a process requiring the support of family, friends, and the entire community."*

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*Journalists covering issues related to alcohol and drugs can find current facts, reports and other information at the Substance Abuse Newsroom, [www.alcoholdrugnewsroom.org](http://www.alcoholdrugnewsroom.org).*