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Local Nonprofit Increases Leadership to Meet Needs of San Diegans

Director of External Affairs and Board Members retained to expand 211 San Diego Awareness

San Diego – With more than 180,000 clients calling 211 San Diego this year for assistance with their personal crisis, John Ohanian, Chief Executive Officer of 211 San Diego, is pleased to announce that the organization is expanding its leadership to meet the increasing demand for 211's services in San Diego. Earlier this week, Ohanian and the 211 San Diego Board of Directors retained Lourdes Jimenez as Director of External Affairs, and also welcomed Melissa Hayden Cook, President and Chief Executive Officer of Sharp Health Plan, and Scott Suckow, CEO of Mental Health America of San Diego County, to its board.

“With the 2007 wildfires integrating 211 into the region’s disaster response system and now with the current down turn of our economy, San Diegans are looking for services that will offset the impact. They know that 211 is here 24/7 to help them connect to services they need,” said Ohanian. “The expansion of our board and staff with members that show strong community support and professional knowledge helps us work together to meet the needs of those 211 clients.”

Lourdes Jimenez, 211 San Diego’s Director of External Affairs:

Lourdes Jimenez brings an impressive background in public advocacy, higher education, public relations and business management to 211 San Diego. Prior to her current position, she served as the Director of State and Local Government Relations for the University of California San Diego where she furthered the University's legislative agendas and acted as a liaison between the University and state and local government officials; including the California State Assembly, where she carried out extensive media relations and managed the legislative agenda for several committees of the Assembly.

With Jimenez’s professional strengths lying in legislative strategy, public outreach, and advocacy leadership, she will bring a heightened level of participation and awareness of 211 to our community locally and across California and the nation.

Melissa Hayden Cook, President and Chief Executive Officer of Sharp Health Plan:

Melissa Hayden Cook, President and Chief Executive Officer of Sharp Health Plan since 2005, brings more than 20 years experience in the health care industry to 211 San Diego’s Board of Directors. Prior to her current position, Hayden Cook worked for Sharp HealthCare from 1994-2000 as Senior Vice President of Marketing, and also served on the Sharp Health Plan Board of Directors for three years. Hayden Cook also held key management positions with HealthNet and Cigna, where she was responsible for managed care strategy, sales and management, revenue growth, product development, and broker development. She is also a member of the community organization Health Sciences High and Middle College (HSHMC), which develops our health care leaders of tomorrow; the California Association of Health Plans (CAHP) board and CAHP Foundation Board; and the Board of Health Plan Alliance, a national association of not-for-profit health plans.

To date, 211 connects more than 22% of its clients to health-related resources or programs in their communities. Hayden Cook's expertise in management, marketing, and product development in the health care field will support 211's mission to expand its partnerships and narrow gaps within the community to ensure San Diegans are receiving services they need to build and sustain healthy lives.

Scott Suckow, Chief Executive Officer of Mental Health America of San Diego County:

Scott Suckow has been the Chief Executive Officer of Mental Health America of San Diego County since 2007, during which time he has doubled their outreach staff with a focus on underserved and unserved communities. Prior to his position with Mental Health America, Suckow held a community building position with the United Way of San Diego County. While there, Suckow worked to strengthen the community's social services safety net while supporting countless resident led community neighborhood improvement projects.

Suckow is also the Chair of the 211 Ambassadors Coalition that consists of more than 75 community agencies, funders, and corporations that work to support and build awareness of 211 in San Diego. With Suckow's management experience along with fifteen years experience with nonprofit chronic disease health organizations, his expertise will assist in 211's partnerships with other fellow agencies to better streamline the delivery system within the San Diego community with the goal to maximize services to 211's clients.

About 211 San Diego:

Every hour of every day, someone in San Diego County searches for services, from food and housing assistance to care for an ailing parent or child. With more than 2,000 community agencies providing more than 5,000 health and human service programs in San Diego, finding one's way can seem insurmountable. By dialing 211, clients work with a live call specialist to receive services and information tailored to their needs.

During a disaster or public crisis, 211 partners with the County of San Diego's Office of Emergency Services to be the central place for non-emergency disaster information during a disaster. During Firestorm 2007, 211 San Diego helped more than 120,000 residents connect to valuable resources like road closures, shelters, evacuations, and recovery assistance.



With primary funding from First 5 San Diego, 211 San Diego helps people by connecting them efficiently to the service delivery system, and providing vital trend information for community planning. For more information about 211, go to 211sandiego.org.

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