

PROJECT HEALTHY NEIGHBORS

Santa Barbara Homeless Health Fair

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Project Healthy Neighbors” Serves Record Number of Homeless Individuals

Free program is largest mobile health and wellness clinic for homeless individuals

Santa Barbara, CA, November 20, 2009—The fifth annual Project Healthy Neighbors, a three-day health fair for the homeless population of Santa Barbara, announced that it served a **record number of 624 homeless individuals** this past week. The event, which took place on November 16th, 17th and 18th at Casa Esperanza Homeless Center, is a free service and the largest mobile medical clinic of its kind in Southern California that goes directly to the homeless residents.

400 H1N1 vaccines were administered as well as an almost equal number of seasonal flu vaccines. 150 pneumonia vaccines were given and 75 rapid HIV tests to high-risk persons were conducted. Project Healthy Neighbors volunteers handed out 500 survival backpacks, which included sweatshirts, rain ponchos, hats, socks and other personal needs supplies in time for the winter storm season. 430 pairs of new shoes were also given; 330 were donated by Soles4Souls, and the remaining 100 pairs were funded by a local donor.

“I would like to personally thank all of the volunteers who gave up their mornings this past week to serve this vulnerable population,” said Ken Williams, Homeless Outreach social worker and Coordinator of Project Healthy Neighbors. “The tremendous outpouring of concern for people who find the streets their home during the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression is a testament to the strength of human compassion. You make Santa Barbara a special place that I am not only proud to call home, but feel extremely fortunate to be a part of. Thank you.”

This year saw a great demand at the doctors’ stations, where four doctors were kept continuously busy all three mornings. The sad surprise was the number of children. In years past, Project Healthy Neighbors saw one or two children; this year the number of children was roughly 20.

“Project Healthy Neighbors is an extraordinary example of what can be accomplished in our community when individuals, public agencies, private nonprofits and foundations work together,” said John Buttny, Executive Director of Bringing Our Community Home, the organization coordinating the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Santa Barbara County. “‘Bringing Our Community Home’ is privileged to be a part of this effort.”

Project Healthy Neighbors is a community collaboration and free mobile medical clinic bringing a range of critical medical services directly to the homeless community for free, including medical treatment, disease prevention, wellness care, mental health, and substance counseling. This year, Project Health Neighbors expanded the range of services offered to include swine flu vaccinations and haircuts.

The collaborative of participating organizations are as follows: The County of Santa Barbara Departments of Public Health and ADMHS, Direct Relief International, Soles4Souls, Families Uniting to

Nurture Dreams (FUND), Veteran's Administration, New Beginnings Counseling Center, Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, Santa Barbara Cottage Health System, Easy Lift, Casa Esperanza Homeless Center, St. Francis Foundation of Santa Barbara's Parish Nursing Community Outreach Program operated by Cottage Health System, Bringing Our Community Home/10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, Rape Crisis Center, Domestic Violence Solutions, UCSB Student Health Outreach, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA), Underground Hair Salon, Midland School and the Greater Santa Barbara Clergy Association.

Project Healthy Neighbors' goal is the prevention of disease, illness and death amongst the homeless population. It is to deliver services with compassion, respect and acknowledgement of the harsh environment homeless residents find themselves in, and for these three days, to not only provide needed medical and social services but to also share our common humanity with our neighbors who find the streets their home.

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