



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION**  
September 10, 2008

**CONTACT:** Jose Alvarez (619) 515-6635

## **FORMER ADDICTS SAY “THANK YOU” AND “I AM SORRY “ THROUGH ARTWORK *Mother and Daughter Share Their Story of Drug Addiction and Recovery***

September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. Today, County of San Diego health and elected officials were joined by people in recovery from alcohol and drug abuse to celebrate the success of the thousands of San Diegans who each year enter and complete treatment programs throughout the County.

“Addiction does not simply affect the individual addict. It affects children and families, and ultimately impacts entire communities. Addiction leads to financial struggles, marital problems, domestic violence, child abuse and crime. Addiction leads to death,” said Vice-Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, from the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors.

Jacob was joined by Nick Macchione, Director of the County’s Health and Human Services Agency; Sam Valdez, Program Director for Nosotros, a County-funded treatment program; and several former drug users, including a mother and a daughter, both former meth addicts.

They gathered outside the County Administration Center to unveil the “I am sorry...Thank you” exhibit, showcasing the artwork of treatment patients from throughout the county. Through their art, the former users apologize to their friends and families for the pain their addiction has caused. They also thank those that provided support and helped them kick their addictions.

The exhibit was created to commemorate Recovery Month and will be on display at the County Administration Center during September. After that, the exhibit will be displayed at treatment centers throughout the region.

“People with substance abuse problems go into treatment programs addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Some walk out clean and sober, ready to live healthy and more fulfilling lives. Some make progress towards recovery. Others fall off the wagon because they are not ready to give up their addiction,” Jacob added.

The County of San Diego funds a number of residential and non-residential treatment programs throughout the region.

“Drug addiction dramatically shifts a person’s attention and priorities. To drug abusers, their job, their children, their family and their friends often lose relevance. For drug addicts, their primary concern and top priority is scoring the



Supervisor Dianne Jacob and County treatment centers’ clients unveil the “I am sorry...Thank you” exhibit.



## COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

next high,” said Macchione. “Overcoming an addiction takes perseverance and determination even when things seem to be going from bad to worse.”

During 2007, more than 13,000 people entered treatment programs funded by the County’s Health and Human Services Agency and its Alcohol and Drug Services division.

Among those admitted, more than 11 thousand were adults and more than 1,800 were adolescents. Men outnumbered women by almost two to one.

Overall, nearly 40 percent of patients came into County funded treatment programs seeking help for a meth addiction. The other drugs of choice were alcohol, followed by marijuana, cocaine and heroin.

The situation is similar at the state level. Among the nearly 200,000 people admitted into treatment in California in 2007, the primary drugs of choice were amphetamines, including meth; followed by marijuana, heroin, cocaine and alcohol.

Typically, about one third of people who enter treatment complete their program, while one third drop out, and one third make progress towards recovery. These rates of treatment completion are similar to the state and national averages.

It took Kim Shively several attempts at treatment before she was finally able to kick her meth addiction. She then turned to alcohol, but eventually gave it up on her own, using the steps she learned while in treatment. She’s been clean from meth for nine years and from alcohol for the past 18 months.

“I was not ready to give up the drug,” said Kim, who started using meth at age 17. “The first time I used meth, I was hooked,” she added.

Given her drug addiction and her problems with the law she could not take care of her daughter Cassie. She sent Cassie to live with her parents.

“Drugs were more important to me. She (Cassie) got in the way,” said Kim, adding that she decided to get clean to be there for Cassie and her younger son. The worst thing about her addiction, she said, was seeing her children follow the same path of destruction. Cassie also became addicted to meth and landed in jail several times. Kim’s 17-year-old son is in juvenile hall because of drugs.

Like her mother, Cassie dropped out of treatment twice. However, on the third try she stuck with it.



Cassie Shively (podium) fights back tears as she shares her story of addiction and recovery. Cassie and her mom Kim (left) both were addicted to meth.



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

“I got tired of going to a bunch of rehab centers,” said Cassie, adding that she was motivated by a desire to establish a better relationship with her daughter, something she missed as a child. “I did not have a relationship with my mom. As the months in treatment went by, I began to see more of my daughter and I fell in love with her.”

Substance abuse is a treatable disease. Unfortunately, not all drug abusers are seeking help. A 2006 National Institute on Drug Addiction study found that 69 percent of Americans reported knowing someone with a substance abuse problem. Furthermore, that same survey revealed that of the more than 22 million people ages 12 and older addicted to drugs, only 4 million received treatment.

People suffering from a drug addiction are encouraged to seek help by calling the County’s Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

###