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ELDERHELP OF SAN DIEGO AWARDED \$1 MILLION TO SERVE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) SENIORS

San Diego, CA, October 19, 2005—ElderHelp of San Diego, a non-profit organization that assists low-income seniors to remain living independently, has been awarded \$1 million over four years to launch *Aging as Ourselves*—a new program to provide health and social services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) seniors in San Diego County. Local funders for the project include the San Diego Human Dignity Foundation, San Diego National Bank, The California Endowment, Alliance Healthcare Foundation and the Price Galinson Collaborative Fund. ElderHelp was also awarded a \$500,000 matching grant by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support *Aging as Ourselves*.

This innovative, community-based program benefits from a strong collaboration among San Diego agencies that specialize in senior services and organizations that focus on serving the LGBT community. ElderHelp of San Diego will lead the program in partnership with Family Health Centers; The San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center; ElderLaw and Advocacy; Seniors Active in a Gay Environment; and PALS/LINC-age.

“By working together to ensure that services are delivered in a culturally sensitive fashion, we hope to enhance the quality of care and reduce health risks for LGBT seniors,” said Leane Marchese, Executive Director of ElderHelp of San Diego. “LGBT seniors, like many seniors, require more frequent and intensive health care services as they age,” Marchese added.

Aging as Ourselves evolved from a 2003 assessment conducted by the Alliance Healthcare Foundation with support from The California Endowment to ascertain the health care needs of LGBT seniors in San Diego County. The study found that LGBT seniors have special needs and suffer unique barriers to care. For example, many LGBT seniors rarely or never discuss issues of sexual orientation with their health care providers and are less likely to have had a recent physical exam. Many lesbian seniors do not receive regular mammograms and pelvic exams. In addition, many LGBT seniors do not have the traditional family support systems in place to help them in their later years.

Aging as Ourselves will address these needs by building on each agency's expertise to expand access to appropriate, LGBT-friendly health care and social services. Mainstream senior-care providers will learn about the concerns of LGBT patients in order to offer a more sensitive, holistic approach to discussing their health risks and questions. Community groups will become more familiar with techniques to support LGBT seniors in their own homes. Services will include case management, provider education, volunteer training and services, mental health services, health education, legal assistance and LGBT senior social activities.

“Despite the demonstrated need, there are currently no well-established programs focusing on the unique health-related issues of LGBT seniors,” pointed out David M. Pierce, Executive Director of the San Diego Human Dignity Foundation, a local funder for the program. “*Aging as Ourselves* breaks new ground in providing culturally appropriate health and social services to this population,” Pierce added.

Aging as Ourselves is considered a promising model by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. The \$500,000 matching grant for the project was awarded through RWJF's Local Initiative Funding Partners (LIFP), one of the Foundation's most highly competitive annual grantmaking programs. The LIFP office received 295 very strong applications for the 2005 awards and only 17 projects were selected. Using rigorous criteria, the LIFP program supports community-based projects that develop new approaches and collaborations to improve health and health care for society's most vulnerable people.

For more information about *Aging as Ourselves*, contact Leane Marchese, Executive Director, at lmarchese@elderhelpofsandiego.org or (619) 284-9281 x11.

Aging as Ourselves Collaborative Agencies and Funding Partners

ElderHelp of San Diego is a non-profit organization comprised of professionals and community volunteers committed to offering quality social services that help seniors live independently in their own homes. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life for seniors by providing information and services that help them live with independence and dignity. ElderHelp of San Diego targets frail, low-income seniors—those with the fewest resources and the least support. Founded in 1973 in the inner city neighborhood of North Park, ElderHelp of San Diego has grown to become a regional community resource center for seniors and their families.

Seniors Active in a Gay Environment (SAGE)—Founded in 1980, SAGE is an organization that provides LGBT seniors and guests an environment in which they can socialize and remain active. SAGE sponsors a variety of programs and services, including a community center at which LGBT seniors gather, regular social events and a monthly newsletter for members.

Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCS)—FHCS is a private, non-profit organization that has served the health care needs of San Diego County since 1970. FHCS provides comprehensive, accessible, quality health care services to residents and businesses of San Diego and the surrounding region. They offer affordable services to all income levels, with a special commitment to low-income, medically underserved populations. FHCS provides a network of numerous primary care clinics located throughout the County of San Diego, two mobile medical units, and numerous other sites providing ancillary services. FHCS is the largest comprehensive provider of HIV services in San Diego County.

The San Diego LGBT Community Center (The Center)—Incorporated in 1973 as a community-based, non-profit agency, The Center is the nation's second oldest and third largest LGBT community center. Functioning as the LGBT community's leadership organization, The Center houses over 50 programs, projects and services that reach out to the LGBT, HIV/AIDS and allied communities.

Elder Law & Advocacy—Established in 1978 as a non-profit charitable social service agency, Elder Law & Advocacy is the only legal services and Medicare counseling agency in the Southern California region that devotes all of its resources to helping seniors through a community-based delivery system. Elder Law & Advocacy's attorneys, staff and volunteers travel all over the region to assist seniors, going to senior centers, nutrition sites, senior living complexes, mobile home parks, nursing homes, hospitals, and the residences of ill, homebound individuals. Programs include legal services for persons ages 60 and

over; information, counseling, and advocacy for matters involving health insurance, long term care insurance, Medicare and HMOs; legal advice and representation for caregivers of individuals ages 60 and over; health monitoring and legal assistance for skilled nursing home residents; and some legal assistance for clients regarding litigation matters.

Lesbians in North County (LINC)—LINC is a grassroots, non-profit organization that provides a safe and open environment for lesbians seeking support and social activities. LINC coordinates social activities, sponsors events and provides a network for lesbians in the North San Diego County community. LINC is also affiliated with Proud Active Lesbian Seniors (PALS/LINC-age). The purpose of PALS/LINC-age is to provide a friendly, supportive setting in which to exchange ideas, concerns and experiences; share pertinent information and activities; advance the visibility, health and welfare of senior lesbians; and reach out and connect with the lesbian community.

The San Diego Human Dignity Foundation was established in 1996 with a mission to improve the quality of life within San Diego's LGBT community by promoting responsible philanthropy to enact positive social change. The foundation funds programs and projects that promote equal treatment, tolerance, wellness, well being and above all else human dignity.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. Helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need—the Foundation expects to make a difference in our lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

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