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FOR: CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

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Number of Families Hit Hard by Recession is Soaring

Project Homeless Connect event to focus on families and children in need

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – The number of families badly hit by the recession and in need of help is rising at an alarming rate, according to experts. Homeless family service providers in San Francisco report that, in the past two months alone, their “in-take” service has increased by 200 percent.

“We are seeing more and more families coming in here for the first time, and the vast majority of them are experiencing homelessness for the first time,” says Martha Ryan, founder and Executive Director of the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP). “Many families are renters who have had their homes foreclosed on, and in some cases had no idea the house or apartment they were living in was in jeopardy.”

Ryan says for families with small children and limited resources it can be difficult to find a new home at short notice. Many are forced to turn to family members or friends for shelter, but those are temporary measures. “More and more families are being forced to try and find emergency shelter,” says Ryan. “The problem is there is only one family shelter in San Francisco, and that fills up fast. We need to be able to do more to help.”

That’s why Project Homeless Connect has developed Family Connect, to focus on helping families, children and youth in need. The special event is taking place at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium on Wednesday, April 8, 2009 from 10 a.m. till 3pm.

“The homeless in San Francisco are our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and increasingly our children,” says former State Senator John Burton, founder and Board Chair of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. The Foundation is helping sponsor Family Connect. “We know what they need to turn their lives around; quality education, access to health care, safe housing. That is why Family Connect is so vital for the future of these children and their families. It provides a starting point in getting them the help they need to get off the streets and get their lives back on track.”

“The image most people have of a homeless person is a man, often middle aged or older,” says Judith Klain, Director of Project Homeless Connect. “But around 40 percent of San Francisco’s homeless



population are members of homeless families. They face complex barriers to getting the help they need, particularly if they have young children.”

According to the San Francisco Unified School District there are more than 1,600 homeless students in our schools. But while the numbers of homeless students is on the rise the amount of state and federal funding available to help them is remaining static, at just \$300,000 a year. In the past the School District has relied heavily on nonprofit organizations to help out, but this year many nonprofits are experiencing financial problems of their own.

Family Connect is intended to help these children and youth, and their families, overcome the barriers they face and get the help they need. The one-day event will provide them with services they would not otherwise receive or which might take them months to find. Those services include medical care for physical or mental health issues, dental care, eyeglasses, assistance in applying for benefits and housing and much more.

The one-stop shopping event means that many families will be able to get done in one day what might otherwise take months to achieve.

PHC has proven so effective that it is serving as the model for similar programs in more than 200 cities across the U.S. as well as in Australia and Canada.

For more information contact Kevin McCormack or go to www.projecthomelessconnect.com

About Project Homeless Connect

Project Homeless Connect makes a real difference in the lives of the City's homeless by bringing together almost 250 non-profit agencies, private businesses and volunteers to assist San Franciscans in need. Since the program's inception in October 2004 as a joint effort of San Francisco's health care, housing and human service systems, Project Homeless Connect has been supported by tens of thousands of volunteers, individuals and companies giving their time, cash, clothing, food and essential services. To date, this program has provided services to thousands of the City's most economically disadvantaged men, women and children with basic human needs and housing. Project Homeless Connect is a key component of Mayor Newsom's 10-year plan to abolish homelessness in San Francisco. This unprecedented approach to helping the homeless has been adopted as a national model in more than 170 jurisdictions in the U.S and has also been implemented in Canada and Australia.

About the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes

The John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes is committed to reducing participation in California's foster care system and improving the quality of resources and support for homeless and foster youth former foster youth. For more information, please visit our website at www.johnburtonfoundation.org.

About the Homeless Prenatal Program

The Homeless Prenatal Program works with families to end the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Seizing the motivating opportunity created by pregnancy and parenthood, HPP joins with families to help them recognize their strengths and trust in their capacity to transform their lives.