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FOR: CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

CONTACT: Kevin McCormack at mccormkd@sutterhealth.org or 415-600-7484 or pager 415-232-6463

Number of Homeless Rising, No End in Sight for Recession-hit San Franciscans

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – While economists are making confident predictions that the recession is over and the economy is rebounding, the reality on the streets of San Francisco is very different. The number of homeless, including families, continues to rise as more and more people lose their jobs, their health care coverage, and their homes.

On October 28th Project Homeless Connect will be helping meet the needs of the homeless at the Bill Graham Auditorium at Civic Center, from 10am to 3pm. The event marks the fifth anniversary of Project Homeless Connect.

“This is something of a bittersweet anniversary,” says Judith Klain, Director of Project Homeless Connect. “The bitter part is that we had hoped that in five years, in a country with the wealth and resources of the U.S., we could have found a way to ensure no-one who wanted a home was without one. The sweet is that we live in a city where we can continue to count on thousands of ordinary men, women and children stepping forward to help those less fortunate than themselves. Project Homeless Connect exemplifies the community’s outpouring of compassion to help people who are in desperate circumstances.”

Project Homeless Connect began in October 2004, under the direction of Mayor Gavin Newsom, with fewer than 300 volunteers surveying the homeless in downtown San Francisco. Since then more than 21,000 volunteers have helped provide services and care to more than 29,000 homeless and poor San Franciscans.

“Project Homeless Connect is a cost-effective and efficient way to deliver services,” said Mayor Newsom. “The project is a catalyst for engagement and collaboration among city government, community volunteers, nonprofits, and business, and now in its 5th year, has proved to be a great success,” said Mayor Gavin Newsom.

More than 300 corporations and 250 service providers have helped support the work of PHC, providing both volunteers and financial support. The sponsor of the fifth anniversary of PHC is Blue Shield of California.



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www.ProjectHomelessConnect.com



“As a not-for-profit health plan based in San Francisco, Blue Shield of California is committed to helping those in need in the communities we serve,” said Paul Markovich, Executive Vice President and COO of Blue Shield of California. “We have partnered with Project Homeless Connect for the past five years and are proud to continue to give to our community and help provide medical and social services to people trying to get back on their feet.”

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. In the past five years that has meant helping 2,976 people get off the streets and into housing or shelter; helping 5,354 individuals to get medical care; and giving out 7,067 pairs of eyeglasses.

PHC has proven so effective that it is serving as the model for similar programs in more than 220 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 Blue Shield of California

Blue Shield of California, an independent member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit health plan dedicated to providing Californians with access to high quality care at a reasonable price. Founded in 1939, it now has 3.4 million members, 4,800 employees, one of the largest provider networks and more than 20 office locations, providing a wide range of commercial and government products throughout the state. The company has contributed \$100 million over the past three years to the Blue Shield of California Foundation to fund nonprofit organizations that improve access to quality health care in California. Contact your local agent or broker for more information about Blue Shield products and services, or visit the Blue Shield web site at www.blueshieldca.com.