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**The San Diego Foundation Grants \$235,000
to Help the Deaf-Blind**

SAN DIEGO – Jan. 24, 2011. The San Diego Foundation will grant \$235,000 over three years to the San Diego branch of the Helen Keller Center. This philanthropic support of deaf-blind San Diegans is made possible through the Adelaide Allen Fund held at The San Diego Foundation.

Deaf-blind individuals have severe to total loss of both their vision and hearing. The Helen Keller National Center estimates there are more than 500 deaf-blind San Diego County residents.

The Adelaide Allen grant is designated for a Support Service Provider (SSP) pilot program to train sighted guides that facilitate increased independence for the deafblind.

Thanks to this funding, an estimated 45-60 deaf-blind San Diegans will benefit from three to five hours per week of SSP services, which will help them with shopping, banking, dining in restaurants, and other ordinary activities that require guidance.

Support Service Providers are distinct from translators, who do word-for-word translations of verbal information in formal settings, like legal hearings or medical appointments. SSPs, on the other hand, confer visual information to deaf-blind consumers. Since SSP services are far less costly than formal translations, they can be provided on a regular basis for day-to-day activities.

SSPs communicate with their clients through tactile sign language, modified visual sign language, or amplified speech. Sighted deaf people are often excellent SSPs because of their strong sign language skills and shared experience of deafness.

After significant research and oversight, The San Diego Foundation's Health and Human Services Working Group determined the Helen Keller National Center's local office had the expertise and capacity to launch this pilot. The organization's mission is to enable deaf-blind individuals to live and work in the communities of

their choice. It operates another Support Service Provider Program for the deaf-blind in Long Island, New York.

The Seattle Deaf-Blind Service Center initiated the first Support Service Provider program for the deaf-blind in 1986. San Diego's pilot is the 20th SSP program in the United States, though about ten other areas are investigating the possibility of establishing such programs.

Foundation staff conducted research to learn about the deaf-blind in San Diego and their needs, reviewing literature published by the American Association for the Deaf-Blind (AADB) and the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). National experts in the field were interviewed, including Jelica Nuccio at the Seattle Deaf Blind Service Center, Ed Gervasoni at the Arizona Association of the Deaf-Blind, and Cathy Kirscher at the Helen Keller National Center. Staff also spoke with representatives from the San Diego Center for the Blind, the Braille Institute San Diego, and Deaf Community Services San Diego.

About The San Diego Foundation

The San Diego Foundation is proud to stand as San Diego's leading resource for information about charitable giving and community needs. We encourage, support and facilitate meaningful dialogue on issues affecting each of our communities, and work with philanthropists to develop creative solutions to meet critical community needs. Since its inception in 1975, The San Diego Foundation has helped public-spirited citizens find ways to address community problems. The funds we manage now number in the thousands. Through them, our donors support numerous organizations and serve a variety of extraordinary causes. Our donors and funds all share a common purpose: to make San Diego a better place to live, work and play. For more information, visit The San Diego Foundation at www.sdfoundation.org.