



NEWS RELEASE

February 7, 2007

Former foster care youth get a new home *San Diego Youth & Community Services debuts residential program*

SAN DIEGO – A new program for foster care youth who have “aged out of the system” has opened on 35th Street in Normal Heights. Developed and operated by San Diego Youth & Community Services (SDYCS), the site will provide transitional housing and support services for former foster care youth between the ages of 18 and 24.

The program will serve up to eight to ten youth and five to six small children in a newly refurbished eight-unit apartment community. With funding from the City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency (\$1.1 million) and the San Diego Housing Commission (\$413,000), SDYCS purchased and extensively renovated the property in 2006.

According to San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders and Councilmember Toni Atkins, the financial support from the city was well placed.

“I want to commend San Diego Youth & Community Services for everything they’re doing to stop homelessness before it happens. That’s absolutely the best approach, especially when we’re talking about such a vulnerable population,” said Sanders.

Councilmember Atkins – whose Council District 3 includes Normal Heights – echoed those thoughts. “I am thrilled to see this program in my district. San Diego Youth & Community Services will provide a vital service to the community as well as to the City of San Diego. I feel very strongly that our youth should not be faced with living on the streets. They deserve to be heard, housed and helped,” she noted.

According to SDYCS reports, an average of 300 foster teens reach adulthood each year in San Diego. Here and nationwide, between 25 to 40 percent of all foster care youth become homeless within 12 months of reaching the age of 18 (when assistance is discontinued). High percentages of this population also become dependent on welfare or engage in criminal activities. The SDYCS program is designed to help counter such trends.

“We are thrilled to open our doors. The 35th Street program provides a safety net for emancipated foster youth who otherwise would be at risk of becoming homeless,” said Walter Philips, executive director and CEO of San Diego Youth & Community Services. “Tremendous thanks go to our public- and private-sector partners whose collaboration and enthusiasm helped make this dream come true,” he added.

Partners included the City of San Diego, the City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency, San Diego Housing Commission, United Development Group, QUALCOMM and County of San Diego Health and Human Services.

The SDYCS transitional housing program will help former foster care clients prepare for lifelong self-sufficiency. The apartments will house male and female individuals, single parents, and couples with children. Through a County of San Diego rent subsidy program, residents pay only 30 percent of their gross income for rent. One of the two-bedroom units will house a resident manager who will be on-call to assist residents in the evenings and on weekends.

Supportive services will include individual case management, counseling, crisis intervention, recreational activities, access to health and child care, and Independent Living Skills classes. The latter will cover topics such as budgeting, banking, parenting tips, work force preparation and applying for college. Participants can live at the center for up to two years as they prepare to become self-sufficient.

According to Housing Commission CEO Elizabeth C. Morris, helping former foster care youth gain “life skills” is a key part of the SDYCS program. “Can you imagine? Turning 18 and having no home or family. Little or no income. No one to co-sign a lease, much less help you prepare for a career. This program addresses those needs,” said Morris.

The two-story building, built in 1963, is comprised of two one-bedroom apartments and six two-bedroom apartments. Renovations to the property were completed at the beginning of 2007 and residents are in the process of moving in. Interior upgrades to the apartment complex included new flooring, paint, ceiling fans, window blinds, lighting, and remodeled bathrooms and kitchens. Exterior improvements ranged from landscaping and courtyard tile to new laundry rooms. For more information about the program, call San Diego Youth & Community Services, 619.221.8610 (Annette Mike, ext. 275, or Hilary McFatrige, ext. 257).

###

San Diego Youth & Community Services

San Diego & Community Services (SDYCS) is a non-profit charitable organization that, since its inception, has helped stabilize the lives of over 500,000 homeless, runaway, abused and at-risk youth in the San Diego area. Launched in 1970 when volunteers established one of the first runaway youth shelters in America, SDYCS now provides intensive services to more than 9,000 children and their families each year. This nationally recognized agency offers emergency services, safe places to live and long-term solutions for kids “on their own” by providing shelters, group homes, foster homes, community centers and transitional housing. Professional help for high-risk youth is provided to all 17 major locations in San Diego County.

Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego

Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego eliminates blight from designated areas, as well as achieves the goals of development, reconstruction and rehabilitation of residential, commercial, industrial, and retail districts. Redevelopment is one of the most effective ways to breathe new life into deteriorated areas plagued by social, physical, environmental or economic conditions that act as a barrier to new investment by private enterprise.

San Diego Housing Commission

The San Diego Housing Commission is a public agency working to expand affordable housing opportunities in the City of San Diego. Each year, the agency helps 80,000 low-income individuals with affordable housing through award-winning programs that benefit the city's economy and revitalize neighborhoods. The agency also finances affordable housing development and advises the San Diego City Council on housing policy matters.