

Thursday, October 26, 2006

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8 PM CST

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## **MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION CHANGES NAME**

### ***First of 320 Mental Health Associations Nationwide to Make Transition***

(Indianapolis, October 26) – Mental Health America of Indiana is the new name of a nearly century old organization that is the oldest and largest charitable organization dealing with mental illness and encouraging mental wellness in Indiana.

Formerly the Mental Health Association in Indiana, Inc., the not-for-profit is one of the first mental health organizations and is the largest in the country with 50 local affiliates and over 20,000 members. It was founded in 1916.

“The manner in which we view and treat mental illness in this country, now as a medical illness, necessitates a more dynamic organization that is reflected in our new name,” said Stephen C. McCaffrey, President and CEO, as he announced the name change during the annual gala fundraising event, Removing the Mask, in downtown Indianapolis’ historic Indiana Roof Ballroom.

“Mental Health America of Indiana (MHAI) works in partnership with a broad network of MHAs across Indiana on local, state and national issues to promote mental wellness everywhere people live, work and play; support emotional development of young people; empower people to protect their rights and to direct their own mental health and well-being; and to ensure access to quality mental health care for all everyday and in times of crisis.”

#### *Why the Name Change*

According to McCaffrey, “Mental health is the cornerstone of health. We can no longer be satisfied as an Association of individuals working to improve the lives of persons with mental illness. Rather, we must marshal the strength of America to redirect the resources of our society to make mental wellness a reality in this country.”

McCaffrey continued that mental health is a prominent concern for all as our work lives, home life and world events bring dangers, life’s disappointments and disasters home to all of us. “Our mental health is challenged daily. We must provide treatment when required, but focus on prevention and the promotion of wellness. Mental Health America believes the time is now to work together to bring wellness home to everyone in Indiana and in this country,” McCaffrey said.

It is estimated that more than 60 millions Americans, a full fifth of the country’s population, annually seek help in work through serious mental conditions. The important

first step is to connect to the critical treatment that can help them move on to recovery and back to the mainstream of life. Understanding treatment options and accessing help can be roadblocks for many. Mental Health America will work so that everyone knows the steps to take to experience mental wellness for a lifetime.

“Mental health must be merged in our thinking and attitude with overall health. We should seek to be mentally acute for a lifetime, and to address mental conditions early so as to move through a lifetime of mental wellness. Mental Health America will help connect people with the help they need,” McCaffrey continued, as we are the nation’s network for mental health information and advocacy.

## MHA History

In 1915, the Indiana Board of State Charities adopted a resolution requesting the Governor to appoint a committee of eight to determine “what the problem of mental defectives is in Indiana, including the epileptic, feebleminded and insane; what is being done for them here and elsewhere, and in the light of the best experience, what programs can be suggested in the state.”

Clifford Beers, founder of the Mental Health America, formerly the National Mental Health Association, was present for the committee meetings. In 1916 at the Indiana Conference of Mental Defectives, Beers helped to organize what was originally called the State Society for Mental Hygiene. Only the third such state organization in the nation, the Indiana mental health organization would be affiliated with the National organization. The Indiana Society and the National organization set forth the following goals:

- to improve attitudes toward mental illness and the mentally ill;
- to improve services for the mentally ill; and
- to work for the prevention of mental illness and promote mental health.

Thus the beginnings of what was to be renamed the former Mental Health Association in Indiana, now Mental Health America of Indiana, which maintains its status as an affiliate to the national organization, Mental Health America. Mental Health America of Indiana (MHAI) has always been a citizen’s organization and is the only organization today concerned with every aspect of mental health. From the individual whom has a mental illness to the family member charged with care giving responsibilities, from the community advocate to policy makers across the state, MHAI is involved.

Mental Health America of Indiana works to create a culture of mental wellness in which Hoosiers understand and manage their mental health and lead mentally healthy and successful lives due to its advocacy, education, research and service.