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For Immediate Release

November 8, 2010

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2010 NAMIWALKS FOR THE MIND OF AMERICA A SUCCESS

WHITFIELD—Mississippi State Hospital employees, patients and volunteers gathered over the weekend to show their support for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and its mission to bring about community awareness and education of mental health issues.

On Saturday, Nov. 6, they joined hundreds of others from across the state at Mayes Lake in Jackson for NAMIWalks for the Mind of America, a fundraising walk designed to raise money for programs for those affected by serious mental illness and also to raise awareness and erase the stigma associated with mental illness. The day before, a group of around 100 gathered at the hospital campus for their own walk, simply to show their support of NAMI and its activism efforts.

“Friends of Mississippi State Hospital and NAMI Mississippi are joining hands this morning so we can support all of the advocacy programs, education programs and support programs that NAMI provides to people in Mississippi who live with mental illnesses, and also to their families,” MSH Director James Chastain said at the Friday morning walk.

“This is a very important mission that NAMI has, and we’re going to join hands, raise funds, raise awareness, and we’re going to do it all over again tomorrow.”

Saturday’s walk was a success, with groups coming from Southaven, Tunica, Yazoo City, Meridian, Jackson and Gulfport to participate in the event at Mayes Lake.

“Starting off with the partnership between the MSH and NAMI the walk that was held on Friday was a huge success to get the momentum started,” NAMI Mississippi Executive Director Tonya Tate said. “The attendance that we had for the walk on Saturday was outstanding. Being a statewide organization, we definitely had our share of attendance from across the state.”

Those at Mayes Lake also participated in festival-like activities like a cake walk, and the children enjoyed the space jump and visiting with the several therapy dogs who were there. After the actual walk itself ended, everyone had a chance to hear Serve Chilled, a band of local teens who played favorites from throughout the decades.

After several rounds of door prizes were given out, the 2010 NAMIWalks for the Mind of America came to a close as several individuals shared their own personal stories of living with mental illnesses, and the hope and recovery they have been able to experience despite their diagnoses.

“It was a fun, eventful day,” walk organizer La Vonne Whitehead said.

“There was a lot of team spirit in the air and the gathering of friends and family was phenomenal for me. I am glad that I got to experience the walk with NAMI and Mississippi State Hospital this year and am looking forward to both of them next year.”

MSH, a facility of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, was founded in 1855 and facilitates improvement in the quality of life for Mississippians who are in need of mental health, chemical dependency or nursing home services, by rehabilitating to the least restrictive environment, utilizing a range of psychiatric and medical services, which reflect the accepted standard of care and are in compliance with statutory and regulatory guidelines. The hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission.

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PHOTO ATTACHED:

1 – Mississippi State Hospital employees who participated in the NAMIWalks event on the hospital campus were recognized with gift bags and certificates for their support of the event. Awards were given for the best participation, the best banner, for most t-shirts sold and a spirit award. Pictured are (first row, l to r) Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Regina Lacking, Judy Dillon, Alta King, Latishia Branch, Stacy Davis, Jean Johnson, (second row, l to r) Elizabeth Jackson, Harriett Wiley, Nancy Nelson, Jerone Lacking, Barbara Hill, Teresa Cooper, (third row, l to r) Duan Carter, Sandra Hendrix, Diana Hunter, Clifton Perkins, Hank Laird, Tonya Smith and Chiquita Boyd.

2 – The MSH Community Services team at the Central Mississippi NAMIWalks for the Mind of America event at Mayes Lake on Saturday, Nov. 6.

3 – Just one of the several t-shirt designs that some participants designed themselves and wore at the Central Mississippi walk.