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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State Officials Join MEND for ‘An Affair with Dignity’**

**Pacoima, CA (January 2006)** Elected state officials Richard Alarcon, Lloyd Levine and Cindy Montanez will be co-hosting an upcoming benefit reception for MEND’s Capital Campaign. This campaign will fund a new 40,000 sq. ft. MEND Center which will house MEND's emergency food bank, clothing distribution center, health clinics, and offices. MEND’s current 20,000 sq. ft. building will become home to an expanded Education and Training Center, reopened Furniture Program, Computer Lab and a future child care center.

As poverty has grown in California in the past three decades MEND has remained a beacon of hope and transformation for those in need. The rate of increase in valley poverty is three times greater than in the rest of Los Angeles. The number of people living in poverty in the San Fernando Valley soared by 56.2% between 1990 and 2000. This is an increase of approximately 74,000 people according to the U.S. Census Bureau figures. MEND services over 20% of the cities in the San Fernando Valley, the majority of which are also the poorest cities in the greater Los Angeles area. Since MEND doubled the size of its building in 1996, the number of clients served has grown from 10,500 monthly to more than 38,000 per month.

The expansion will support the mission of MEND ‘to meet each need with dignity’. As MEND executive Marianne Haver-Hill enthusiastically explains “Because of the space constraints, MEND can not adequately provide Medical, Dental, and Eye Care services to all who need help. The Hospitality Center and Kinder care rooms are often filled to overflowing. There is no longer space to house the valley's only free furniture distribution program. Emergency food is warehoused in downtown LA resulting in many additional volunteer hours to transport it. Children are standing in line to use computers for research

after school even though the computer lab is packed with terminals. Clothing is donated by the truckload -- but there is no adequate space to sort and store these items before they are rotated to the Clothing Distribution Center. With the help of our friends and elected leaders, we are embarking on an enlarged facility to make a positive difference.”

The new MEND center is scheduled to open in late 2006.

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**Photo Opportunity:**

**Date:** Thursday, February 2nd, 2006

**Time:** 6-8 PM, with ceremony from 7 – 7:30 PM

**Participants:** State Senator Richard Alarcon, Assemblymember Lloyd Levine, Assemblymember Cindy Montanez and MEND Executive Director Marianne Haver-Hill.

**Prime photo and interview opportunities:** 7 – 7:30 PM

**Where:** Sony Pictures Entertainment in the Rita Hayworth Dining Room – Sony Pictures Plaza, 10202 W. Washington Blvd. Culver City (please enter from Madison Gate)

**Photo opportunities:** Elected officials and guests in the historic Art Deco Rita Hayworth Dining Room

*Media Note:* Please do not advertise personal information in any printings or broadcasts.

**About MEND**

MEND is a volunteer-driven organization that provides services that meet the basic human needs of individuals who reside in the northeast San Fernando Valley. MEND has grown primarily by word-of-mouth into one of the leanest operating non-profit organizations in existence. More than 95 percent of the support and donations the organization receives goes to provide emergency food, clothing, medical and dental care, job skills training and job placement assistance, English and a Second Language classes, computer lab, and a Christmas program. Serving in excess of 38,000 clients each month, MEND is now the largest anti-poverty agency in the Valley.

**Media Note:** MEND staff, volunteers and representatives are available for interviews. For more information, please contact Marianne Haver Hill at 818-896-0246.