

For Immediate Release Monday July 23, 2007

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Mental Health Leaders and First Lady Join Forces to Fight Suicide in Colorado

DENVER, Colo. July 23, 2007 – On average, everyday in Colorado, two lives are lost to suicide. Sadly, this adds up to more loved ones, friends, neighbors and co-workers dying as a result of suicide than from motor vehicle accidents in recent years. Depression is a major factor contributing to this startling problem. Fortunately, there are organizations and leaders in our state who are working to save lives and promote mental wellness.

The Colorado Trust recently awarded \$75,000 dollars to **Mental Health America of Colorado** (MHAC, formerly the Mental Health Association of Colorado) to oversee the Colorado Suicide Prevention & Intervention Plan, a coordinated approach to suicide prevention, education and awareness across the state. The program will incorporate the participation of many partners dedicated to preventing suicide and who aim to reduce Colorado's suicide rate, which is 7th highest in the nation. The **First Lady of Colorado, Mrs. Jeannie Ritter**, has been named Honorary Chairperson of the plan committee. She will work with MHAC, The Colorado Trust and their partners to reach out around the state providing leadership to gather input and help implement suicide prevention strategies that are successful.

“The Colorado Trust recognizes the need to coordinate and integrate mental health services across the state,” said **Irene M. Ibarra, President and CEO of The Colorado Trust**. “MHAC's oversight of a statewide suicide prevention and intervention strategy is key to providing more effective care and reliable treatment to people with mental health needs.”

Mrs. Ritter shared, “I'm very proud to be a part of the combined efforts of The Colorado Trust and MHAC to demonstrate that depression is treatable, and that there are avenues for intervention. We are determined to ensure that people know how to ask for help for themselves or someone they care about.”

“Working together, we will be more successful in educating about mental health and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. By collaborating on this effort, we can save lives...this is good for all of us,” stated **Jeanne M. Rohner, President and CEO of Mental Health America of Colorado**.



A series of regional meetings will be held across the state through fall 2007 culminating in a comprehensive plan which is expected to be completed by May, 2008. Coordinated, statewide prevention efforts, reduction in suicides and suicide attempts as well as increased mental health funding are expected outcomes of the taskforce.

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About Mental Health America of Colorado

Mental Health America of Colorado, formerly the Mental Health Association of Colorado, is the catalyst and voice for the Colorado mental health movement. Through Education, Advocacy, Outreach and Prevention we provide resources to Coloradoans affected by the entire spectrum of mental health issues.

About The Colorado Trust

A grantmaking foundation dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of the people of Colorado, The Colorado Trust has been supporting suicide prevention efforts since 2000. To learn more, visit www.coloradotrust.org.

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