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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SWFAS REACHES MILESTONE
OF 70,000 PEOPLE SERVED**

Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS) has reached a new milestone of serving 70,000 people with substance abuse disorders over the 29-year history of the not-for-profit organization.

SWFAS assigned patient number 70000 at the Detoxification Center this week.

SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis said there is increasing need for substance abuse treatment and prevention services. In the past year, approximately 5,000 individuals received treatment services in various SWFAS programs.

“The good news is that there is increasing awareness of the value of treating the disease of addiction, rather than simply dealing with the consequences of it. That’s a turnaround from years past,” he said.

A study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University showed that 96 cents of every \$1 spent by government on substance abuse was used to fund the aftermath of addiction on the criminal justice system, health care, schools, child welfare, and highway deaths.

Only 3.7 cents goes to fund prevention, treatment, and research programs aimed at reducing the incidence and consequences of substance abuse.

“Government leaders at all levels are learning that it is cheaper to fund treatment than it is to shovel up the wreckage left by substance abuse disorders. Addiction is a chronic disease. With treatment, people do recover,” Lewis said.

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As an example of government support, SWFAS is building a new 44,000 square foot Detoxification and Outpatient Treatment Center on land provided by the City of Fort Myers under a long-term lease on Evans Avenue.

Construction of the new 40-bed facility is now more than 50 percent complete, and is anticipated to be ready for occupancy by March, 2009.

The \$9 million project is made possible through \$2 million in funding from Lee County Government, \$2 million in state funding and numerous foundation and private gifts.

“Many, many supporters have gotten behind this project to make it a reality. We are extremely grateful as are the individuals and families who most need the help,” Lewis said.

Donations are still being accepted for the capital campaign and room-naming opportunities are available.

The new facility also will include room for outpatient counseling and prevention offices now located on McGregor Boulevard and SWFAS administrative offices, consolidating three locations into one.

SWFAS is the most comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention program in Southwest Florida, serving 5,000 people per year from ages 9 to 90. SWFAS offers outpatient and residential programs for both adults and youngsters from seven locations in Lee County.

SWFAS services are not free. Fees are charged on a sliding scale, based on family income. In many cases, private insurance is accepted. SWFAS is a United Way agency.

For more information about the capital campaign or to make a gift to SWFAS, call Lewis at 278-7595, ext. 700.