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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SWFAS, SUSAN BENNETT EARN STATE'S  
TOP PUBLIC RELATIONS HONORS**

Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS) and Susan Bennett Marketing & Media swept the Florida Public Relations Association's annual Golden Image awards, capturing the state's top two awards for the best public relations programs in Florida last year.

The top two awards were among seven presented to SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis and Susan Bennett at the Golden Image Awards ceremony August 5 at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Orlando.

*The Dick Pope All Florida Golden Image Award* was presented for the best overall public relations program in Florida for the "SWFAS Campaign to Build a New Detoxification Center." The campaign also won a *Golden Image Award* for the best public service campaign in Florida, as well as a *Judges' Award* recognizing cost-effectiveness.

It is only the second time in the 51-year history of the Golden Image Awards that a Southwest Florida organization or public relations firm has been honored with the Dick Pope All Florida Golden Image Award, which is named after Dick Pope, the Cypress Gardens pioneer and icon in Florida's public relations history. The last time a Southwest Florida business won the Dick Pope All Florida Golden Image Award was in 2002 when Bonita Bay earned it for the Twin Eagles campaign.

"It is a very humbling experience to be honored by one's peers, which is the highest recognition you can receive in your career, but the most rewarding part of all is knowing that thousands of people with the disease of addiction will get the treatment they need because of our campaign's success," said Susan Bennett, APR, CPRC, who developed the campaign strategy and materials.

Bennett also noted that the competition for the top award was intense from much larger organizations, such as Walt Disney World, the Florida Department of Health, University of Central Florida Medical School, and the Kissimmee Utility Authority.

The entries were judged by the Georgia Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, one of whom wrote:

“This is an amazing organizational work for a program with legs to move forward and will generate societal change for years to come and raise corporate citizen responsibility to save our neighbors,” a Golden Image judge wrote.

The ***Grand Golden Image Award*** was presented for the best printed public relations tool in the state for “A State of Denial,” a 12-page full-color reprint of a two-part *News-Press* series by Francesca Donlan that detailed the critical need for more substance abuse services. The full-color booklet became the centerpiece of the SWFAS campaign to build a new Detoxification Center and Outpatient Treatment Center, which is now under construction on Evans Avenue in Fort Myers. The booklet also won a ***Golden Image Award*** for the best full-color brochure in Florida last year.

The campaign video, “*Saving Lives: The Campaign to Build a New SWFAS Detoxification Center*,” also earned a ***Golden Image Award*** for the best public service video and a ***Judges’ Award*** for SWFAS, Susan Bennett Marketing & Media, and Chaos Productions, which produced the video at no charge to SWFAS.

More than \$6.1 million has been raised so far to build the new 44,000 square foot Detoxification and Outpatient Treatment Center, which will provide 40 beds for detoxification and house outpatient services and administration.

“We are very honored to receive this recognition from FPRA, and are very thankful to our donors who are making this new building a reality. We still need to raise about \$3 million to complete the campaign,” said SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis. Several room naming opportunities are available from \$5,000 to \$1 million. For more information about the campaign, contact Lewis at 278-7595, ext. 700.

SWFAS is Southwest Florida’s most comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention program, operating from nine offices throughout Lee and Hendry counties. Since 1980, SWFAS has helped more than 68,000 residents in Lee, Charlotte, Glades and Hendry counties rebuild their lives. SWFAS offers treatment services at all levels of intensity including residential, outpatient counseling, and group therapy to all parts of the community.

In addition, SWFAS provides detoxification services for adults, prevention programming for all ages, and an Employee Assistance Program for about 70 Southwest Florida businesses.

Susan Bennett Marketing & Media, L.C., is a full-service public relations and marketing firm based in Fort Myers that was founded in 1991 by Susan Bennett, an accredited public relations professional (APR) and certified public relations counselor (CPRC). Bennett, a former Gannett Co. executive and member of the launch team of *USA TODAY*, has won more than 200 awards for promotional work on behalf of commercial, non-profit, and governmental clients.

30

*Cutline: (left to right) Kevin Lewis, SWFAS CEO and Susan Bennett, Susan Bennett*

*Marketing & Media, receive the Dick Pope All Florida Golden Image Award from Suzanne Sparling, president of the Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA).*