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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SWFAS APPLAUDS LEE COMMISSION'S \$2 MILLION FUNDING FOR DETOX

The Lee County Commission voted Tuesday in favor of finalizing plans to award \$2 million to Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS) in support of its capital campaign to build a new Detoxification Center and Outpatient Treatment Facility.

The \$2 million award is the largest funding received to date, according to SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis.

“We are very grateful that our commissioners recognize the importance of providing treatment for residents with the chronic disease of addiction, which impacts one in five people in our community,” he said.

Including the Lee County funding, SWFAS now has raised more than \$5.3 million toward the \$8 million to \$10 million overall cost of the new facility. Other major gifts have been received from the State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP), U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Lee Memorial Health System, Claiborne & Ned Foulds Foundation and Gannett Foundation.

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“There isn’t a day that passes that we aren’t forced to turn away people in need of immediate detoxification because there are no beds available,” said SWFAS Executive Director Kevin B. Lewis. “It truly is a tragedy in progress.”

While the population at risk has nearly tripled in the past 20 years, Lewis said the number of detox beds has decreased from 28 beds in 1984 to 25 beds in 2007, due to inadequate state funding.

“Families need a place to turn in times of crisis,” Lewis said. “The Board of Directors is acutely aware of this need and is committed to raising the money needed to build a new facility.”

The new 40-bed Detoxification Center will be built on land on Evans Avenue donated by the City of Fort Myers under a long-term lease. The four-acre parcel formerly was the home of the Fort Myers Recreation Center adjacent to Southwest Regional Medical Center.

“We recognize the critical importance of providing detoxification services to our residents and are happy to partner with SWFAS in making this facility a reality,” said Fort Myers Mayor Jim Humphrey.

The planned 40,000 square foot facility also will include room for outpatient counseling offices now located on McGregor Boulevard.

The SWFAS Board of Directors and Capital Campaign Cabinet currently are requesting funding from local individuals, businesses, and foundations to help with the project.

SWFAS hopes to break ground later this year with completion one year later.

SWFAS is the largest and oldest comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention program in Southwest Florida, serving 6,000 people per year from ages 9 to 90. SWFAS offers outpatient and residential programs for both adults and youngsters from six locations in Lee County. Fees are charged on a sliding scale, based on family income. In many cases, private insurance is accepted.

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