

CONARD HOUSE ANNOUNCES FIRST ANNUAL ELAINE MIKELS AWARD

Conard House To Recognize Emerging Visionaries In Community Service

San Francisco, Calif. – October 12, 2009– [Conard House](#), a pioneering nonprofit organization developing resources to help people self-manage mental illness since 1960, announced today that in conjunction with the celebration of its 50th Anniversary, Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 4-10), and World Mental Health Day (October 10) it is creating the Elaine Mikels Award. This annual Award will recognize an emerging community service visionary or organization whose groundbreaking good work breeds hope, inspires self-confidence and empowers people to take charge of their own lives. Recipients will exemplify creativity, commitment and leadership potential.

Elaine Mikels was a visionary social worker committed to social justice for all people, especially those on the fringe of traditional society. It was Elaine who saw the need in 1959 for a "normalizing transitional community" for people with mental illness returning to San Francisco from Napa State Hospital. In 1960 she created Conard House, the first "halfway house" in California, named after her social work mentor, Conard Rheiner. Following her pioneering efforts for people living with mental illness, she became active in anti-poverty work, the anti-war movement, the civil rights campaign for gays and lesbians and women's health.

Elaine believed that appropriate housing, though essential for people recovering from mental illness, is not enough to bring about long-term stability and reintegration into the community. This belief is still central to the Conard House mission today. Recognizing the strengths within each individual, Conard House provides a spectrum of programs and services designed to reduce symptoms, help clients find healthy pathways to recovery and promote long-term independent living.

"Elaine's ideas of equality and respect for the individual continue to define our vision of service to our community," said Richard Heasley, Executive Director of Conard House. "Quoted in a 1962 San Francisco Chronicle article, Elaine said 'Acceptance [of the individual] respects their illness, expectations respect their strength.' With this annual Award, we will be honoring the people who still carry the same torch that Elaine lit so many years ago."

The process for the Elaine Mikels Award will be formally introduced at a Nov 5 Founders' Day Event, which kicks off the Conard House year-long 50th anniversary celebration. The first-year winner will be announced at a Fall, 2010 Event. For more information on these events or to request an invitation, please visit: http://www.conard.org/news_and_events/community_events.lasso.

About Mental Illness Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day

In 1990, the U.S. Congress established the first week of October as "Mental Illness Awareness Week" (MIAW) in recognition of the efforts of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to raise mental illness awareness in the United States. Since 1990, mental health advocates across the country have joined together during the first week of October to celebrate.

World Mental Health Day was started by the World Federation for Mental Health in 1992. This is a unified worldwide effort to promote greater public awareness and understanding of mental health and mental illness.

About Conard House

Conard House, Inc. is a private, nonprofit organization providing mental health services to residents of San Francisco. Founded upon core principles of self-empowerment, self-determination and the least restrictive, community-based living, Conard House opened its doors in 1960 as the City's first "halfway house" for adults following hospitalization. Today it serves more than 2,000 people in two dozen locations. Support for its programs and services come from various city agencies, service fees from organizations, rents from residents, grants from foundations and gifts from donors. For more information about Conard House and its programs, please visit www.conard.org.

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