

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact Jan Luongo, APR  
(813) 335-7625 cell

## **Directions for Mental Health, Inc. Creates Endowment Benefiting Children Exposed to Violence**

**CLEARWATER, FL; July 1, 2008** –Directions for Mental Health, Inc., a private non-profit health organization in Clearwater, raised enough money at its annual Gala, held April 19<sup>th</sup>, to establish an endowment, with some matching funds from The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay.

“Our Board of Directors elected to use the proceeds of our annual Gala to establish the endowment for programs for children exposed to violence,” said R. Thomas Riggs, President & CEO of the organization.

Directions for Mental Health offers state-of-the-art clinical services for adults and children coping with mental illness, along with prevention programs for children. Directions is one of the only organizations in Florida serving as a member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. By partnering with leading experts from across the country, Directions’ staff provides expertise to improve treatment and systems of care for children and youths who have been victims of violence, witnesses to violence or suffered a traumatic loss.

It is estimated that as many as 10 million children per year may witness or be victims of violence in their homes. This exposure has a devastating impact on children’s development, affecting emotional growth, cognitive development, physical health and school performance. Children exposed to violence have been significantly linked with increased depression, anxiety, anger, and alcohol and drug abuse, and with decreased academic achievement.

Without the intervention from Directions, children exposed to violence have an increased risk of becoming violent themselves. These children are twice as likely than their peers to be placed in the juvenile justice system and commit crimes at a younger age.

“It was important to us to keep our gala costs as low as possible so we could meet our endowment goal,” said Riggs. “Using a network of volunteers and donated services, our sponsors and supporters allowed us to keep our costs at a low 33 percent of revenue. National averages are 63 percent.”

## **About Directions for Mental Health, Inc.**

Directions for Mental Health, Inc., established in 1982, is a non-profit organization committed to helping heal the hurt in the lives of thousands of Pinellas County residents suffering from—or at risk of—mental illness. With nationally accredited programs, Directions sets the standard for best practices in mental health treatment, while making mental health care affordable and accessible to individuals and families, and building a safer, healthier community. Serving more than 8,000 people per year, Directions is dedicated to developing innovative programs that change lives, while reducing crime, homelessness, drug abuse and child abuse.

For questions about mental illness and programs, visit Directions for Mental Health's website at [www.HealTheHurt.org](http://www.HealTheHurt.org) or call (727) 524-4464 extension 1700.

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