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CONTACT: Michael Shepherd
(760)340-9300
michael@theshepherdgroup.com

**Blue-Ribbon Panel Formed to Launch First-Ever Comprehensive
Assessment of Healthcare Needs in Eastern Riverside County**
HARC Set to Kick Off Sweeping Research Initiative in January 2007

(PALM DESERT, CA) – Seeking to chart the future direction of community healthcare from Calimesa to Blythe, a group of civic leaders have joined forces to create the Healthcare Assessment Resource Center (HARC). The nonprofit organization's first major initiative: a voluminous research study that will provide the region's deepest look yet into the healthcare needs of its diverse population.

Beginning the week of January 8, residents across the region will receive phone calls from a cadre of professional researchers tasked with gathering field data about a range of key healthcare issues. Questions will focus on access to healthcare, behavioral risk factors, current health challenges, gaps in services, as well as demographics. The fieldwork phase concludes in April, followed by an extensive period of data tabulation, review and analysis. Findings from the study – slated to take place every three years -- are scheduled to be published in late 2007,

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HARC Board President Glen Grayman, M.D., former medical director of emergency services at Desert Regional Medical Center, said the needs assessment will



create critically important baseline data for measuring outcomes, effectiveness and change resulting from funding decisions.

“This empirical data will help facilitate better strategic planning and business decisions for agencies in every city across the Coachella Valley and eastern Riverside County,” said Dr. Grayman. “Every partner involved in this organization is committed to seeing our citizenry enjoy a better quality of life, and this data will lay the groundwork for achieving that goal.”

HARC brings together a steering committee of some 31 community partners and leaders, including hospitals, school districts, healthcare districts, county government, public safety and private sector interests. All are contributing substantial financial and human resources necessary to launch the comprehensive needs assessment.

The group has retained the nationally recognized consultancy ORC Macro to conduct the assessment. Researchers there will model the Riverside County study after a similar initiative designed for the Orange County Health Needs Assessment agency. The CEO for that organization has agreed to serve as a consultant, working closely with newly named HARC Executive Director Eileen Packer.

Once the initial survey data is ready to be published, HARC plans to hold a public kick-off in late 2007, when a summary of the findings will be shared with the community.

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