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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kids Hope United unveils Community Mental Health Center *Commissioner Kate Sorenson and other government officials attend*

MIAMI, Fla., (Jan. 23, 2008)—Today, Kids Hope United unveiled its Community Mental Health Center to the Miami-Dade community. Kids Hope United has provided targeted case management services in Miami-Dade County since May 2006. The nonprofit organization received its Community Mental Health Medicaid provider number in October, allowing the agency to expand its services beyond the child welfare system to the entire South Dade community.

“Our work in South Dade during the past two years opened our eyes to the need for a community center,” said Marlin Livingston, executive director. “We saw this need as an opportunity to expand our mission of protecting children and strengthening families.”

Community members in need of mental health services can now access them through the Community Mental Health Center, located at 10720 Caribbean Blvd, Ste. 330. KHU accepts self-referrals as well as referrals from case managers, the court system and schools. The organization offers services on a sliding-scale and accepts Medicaid and most insurance plans.

Specific mental health services include:

- 1) Psychiatric evaluations for children
- 2) Individual and family therapy
- 3) Parent-child interaction through assessments and observations
- 4) Evidenced based, court-approved parenting classes
- 5) Co-parenting counseling for high-conflict families
- 6) Play therapy
- 7) Raising Safe Children (ACT) evidenced-based parenting classes
- 8) Therapeutic supervised visitation for children and families

As part of the Community Mental Health Center, Kids Hope United created a Play Therapy Room in May 2006 with financial support from individuals and corporations, such as Stearns, Weaver, Miller, Weissler, Alhadeff, & Sitterson, P.A. The Play Therapy Room has served as a



visitation room for KHU clients, but will now serve as a therapeutic tool for mental health clients.

The Kids Hope United Play Therapy Room provides a non-threatening environment for children and families. The Play Therapy Room allows the therapist to observe parent/child interaction through the use of a one-way mirror.

“Play Therapy is an important part of our new mental health services,” said Bettina Lozzi-Toscano, Director of the Mental Health Center. “Play therapy allows a child to start communicating his or her feelings through games and other pleasant activities. It also allows the therapist to observe and assess his or her behavior without external interferences.”

An existing KHU client has utilized the services at the center and has benefited by having a safe, therapeutic environment in which to see the four children in foster care. It has allowed the client to have access to the kids in a fun, colorful place so that they don’t feel so bad. It makes the client feel good, too; it helps the client forget about the difficulties for a little bit.

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About Kids Hope United

Kids Hope United is a private human service organization dedicated to protecting children and strengthening families. Kids Hope United offers a diverse array of prevention, intervention and community-based programs. Kids Hope United also specializes in child welfare system management, reform, consultation and training. With principal offices in Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and Florida, Kids Hope United serves more than 15,000 children and their families across the country each year. For more information, visit www.kidshopeunited.org.

