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EIC THINK TANK PRESENTS MENTAL HEALTH MEDIA STRATEGY TO U.S. CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, DC, June 5, 2008 – A Think Tank formed to identify new directions for the perception of mental health issues announced results of a day-long meeting held yesterday, according to Brian Dyak, President and CEO of the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC), which sponsored the meeting. The Think Tank was a first-of-its-kind collaboration between individuals in entertainment, communication academia, medicine, patients, and families. The results were presented today to members and staffers of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus and the Congressional Entertainment Caucus. This first gathering is part of the development of a long term national strategy, the mission of which is to increase the nation's mental health while decreasing the mental health burden. It is believed that such a collaborative approach will lead to more effective solutions and action steps for the role entertainment and the media can play in addressing issues such as post traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, depression, and other mental health issues. For example, David E. Kelly catapulted the issue of Aspergers Syndrome to the nation's attention by featuring a regular character with the illness in primetime television on "Boston Legal." As a result, many viewers learned of Aspergers for the first time, while those who have Aspergers and their loved ones discovered that the illness now had a face on TV. Emmy-winning actor Christian Clemenson, who plays the character on "Boston Legal," was one of the participants in the Think Tank. Among the recommendations to come from the meeting is that it is vital for treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to be evidence-based. After September 11th, it was found by researchers that the more victims of traumatic events were debriefed the more likely they were to develop full-blown PTSD. Therefore, debriefing as a treatment strategy is not helpful. On the other hand, researchers found it helpful to treat the subject with medications to dampen the autonomic nervous system's response immediately after a traumatic experience, and keeping the victim engaged with peers in their community. The Think Tank's mission was to develop communication strategies that incorporate medical, communication, media and entertainment perspectives with a focus on mental healthcare, early diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. The Think Tank marked the launch of the newly formed Entertainment & Media Communication Institute (EMCI), a new division of EIC. The Think Tank recommendations were developed under the direction of EIC. Among those present for the briefing were Congressional Mental Health Caucus Co-Chairs Representatives Grace Napolitano and Tim Murphy, and Congressional Entertainment Caucus Chair Representative Diane Watson.

Among Think Tank participants were: Christian Clemenson, Actor, "Boston Legal;" Marti Noxon, Executive Producer/Writer, "Private Practice;" Jonathan Greene, Co-Executive Producer/Writer, "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit;" James W.

Kearns, Screenwriter/Producer ("John Q"); John Kosinski, Writers Guild of America, west, Inc.; Frank Wheaton, EIC Board Director; Carlos Alcazar, President, Hispanic Communications Network; Prof. Gary Kreps, Chairman, Department of Communications, George Mason University; Prof. Lisa Sparks, Chapman University; Prof. Kathy Rowan, Department of Communications, George Mason University; Dr. Melinda Villagran, Department of Communications, George Mason University; Dr. Gary Sachs, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard University; Dr. Mark Vanelli, Harvard Medical School and Chief Medical Officer at Adheris, Inc.; and Dr. Tom Barrett, President, Business/Life Management. The Institute was formed by EIC to educate and provide information resources for the entertainment industry's creative community and television, online and print media journalists relative to health and social issues, to enhance their capability of addressing such issues with accuracy and authenticity.

"The Institute will coordinate a multi-disciplinary faculty of experts knowledgeable about various health and social issues and about health communications theory and practices," said EIC President CEO Brian Dyak. "These experts, under the leadership of EIC, will conduct briefings to media and entertainment professionals, produce informational publications, provide expert technical assistance through EIC's branded First Draft service, and conduct audience-based research."

The Institute will also host Picture This forums or gatherings of experts and constituency group leaders at both the national and local levels to develop recommendations for media strategies and priority messages for potential entertainment storylines. "Individuals' mental health and well-being are critical issues that affect quality of life, as well as the health of our communities and of our economy," said Congresswoman Grace Napolitano.

"Discussions between leaders in the medical, communication and entertainment fields to introduce information and work cooperatively are crucial to establishing communication and finding different ways to increase awareness of mental health issues." Congressman Tim Murphy said, "During my time as both a psychologist in private practice and in public service, I have seen firsthand the stigma attached to mental illness. Mental illness is real – not an imagined problem – as real and devastating to a family as cancer or diabetes. Films, television and other forms of entertainment have the power to reach across cultural boundaries, traversing the globe with a unique ability to inform and educate audiences about mental health issues."

"I look forward to continuing to work with EIC to create a greater understanding of the entertainment industries' efforts to use their power and influence to address mental health issues," said Congresswoman Diane Watson.

EIC, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1983 by leaders of the entertainment industry to bring the power of the industry to bear on health and social issues. The organization is considered to be the grand daddy and chief pioneer of entertainment

advocacy outreach and one of the premiere success stories in the field of entertainment education and information resources for entertainment creators, through innovative and time-proven services and methods of "encouraging the art of making a difference" from within the entertainment industry. EIC addresses health issues such as drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and addiction; firearm safety and injury prevention; sun safety and skin cancer prevention; human trafficking; terrorism and homeland security; mental health and mental illness, including bipolar disorder, depression and suicide; diabetes; seat belt use and traffic safety; and HIV/AIDS prevention. For more information, please visit www.eiconline.org