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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Villa Esperanza Services and The Caring Hearts Say Good-Bye to the Hope Chest Thrift Store

After 20 years in the community, the Hope Chest is closing – Going Out of Business Sale!

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIF – Friday, November 30, 2006 – Villa Esperanza Services' Hope Chest Thrift Shop is closing its doors after 20 years in the community. The Caring Hearts, a volunteer group that supports Villa Esperanza Services, has been the driving force of the thrift shop for over 10 years. The 'Going Out of Business' sale begins NOW, and the shop permanently closes its doors on Friday, December 22, 2006. The Hope Chest is located at 2412 East Thousand Oaks Blvd., in Thousand Oaks.

The Caring Hearts, led by Westlake resident Anne Grant, have volunteered six days a week at the shop for over 10 years. "The volunteers are an important part of our organization. Not only have they championed the Thrift Shop, they hold an annual fundraising event and they serve as Villa Ambassadors in the community. We are grateful for all they do for Villa," explains Dottie Nelson, Villa Esperanza Services' CEO. "The closing of the Hope Chest is difficult for all involved. It has been like family to our volunteers, clients and staff."

After Villa was informed their lease would not be renewed because the owners wanted the location for other purposes, Villa's Board of Directors voted to not reopen in another site. "We are moving away from an 'in-house' employment program to a larger community based employment program," states Nelson. "This cultural shift promotes greater independence for individuals with developmental disabilities." The Hope Chest provides in-house employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities; participants are trained at the store and taught job skills. Villa's goal is to expand job opportunities in the community. They already have work contracts with Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, The City of Westlake, State Department of Parks and Recreation and various community businesses. The Hope Chest crew has transitioned to a new community business, Nature's Watch in Agoura Hills, assembling activity kits for school classrooms.

After the first of the year, Villa will host a THANK YOU event celebrating the dedication and commitment Caring Hearts has provided to Villa over the years, as well as thanking their donors. "We certainly hope the volunteers will stay connected with Villa and the individuals we serve. They truly make a difference," shares Nelson.

All sales for the thrift shop support the efforts of Villa Esperanza Services in the Conejo Valley, providing programs and services to the developmentally disabled. Villa Esperanza Services offers work programs for individuals with disabilities, independent living and residential programs and Care Management which connects frail elderly, vulnerable seniors and adults with developmental disabilities with public and private services to help maintain independence. Families are also provided with support and information. Villa Esperanza Services was founded in 1961 by a group of mothers who believed their developmentally disabled children deserved quality care and education. Today, Villa serves over 1050 individuals with disabilities and their families in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. For more information please call (805) 446-1939, ext. 14.

www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org.

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