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BECKER & POLIAKOFF AND KRISTI HOUSE FUNDRAISING RECEPTION

WHAT: **Kristi House**, celebrates successful expansion initiative, announces newest plan, Speaker of the House Marco Rubio lends support

WHEN: **Wednesday February 27, 2008, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.**

WHERE: **Becker & Poliakoff**, 121 Alhambra Plaza, 10th Floor, Coral Gables

Friends and supporters of Kristi House gathered at the law offices of Becker & Poliakoff in Coral Gables to mark the successful opening of Kristi House's north Miami-Dade office to provide mental health services to child victims of sexual abuse. The expansion was supported with a \$93,850 grant from The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, the philanthropic arm of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Rachel Pollock Singerman, Spokesperson and Employee Review Team member from the Miami office, presented Kristi House with a check to support both personnel and operating costs of the new office.

The north office marks the second phase of Kristi House's expansion plan which added a south satellite in 2006. In addition to the main facility at the University of Miami/Jackson Hospital area in central Miami-Dade, these satellites better serve families of children who have weekly or twice-weekly counseling appointments to help them recover from the trauma of sexual abuse.

"The successful completion of our therapy expansion initiative is significant," Executive Director Trudy Novicki said. "This location will make access much easier, and in some cases possible, for many families suffering from the trauma and turmoil of child sexual abuse."

Ms. Novicki also announced Kristi House's newest initiative for the coming year that seeks to address a problem involving child victims that no agency in South Florida is dealing with. Kristi House's Commercially Sexually Exploited Children program aims to provide services to children being sexually exploited for profit.

"As we celebrate the fulfillment of one need, another surfaces," she said. "The exploitation of children for money is a problem in our community, although its exact dimensions are unmeasured. These children are the last victims to be seen, treated or even counted."

Florida Speaker of the House Marco Rubio, and Representative Anitere Flores said that they would support Kristi House's efforts to find ways to address the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Kristi House has already convened a task force of law enforcement, social service, and other professional and public officials; started an outreach program at an at-risk middle school; and hired a specialist with experience in the area, Sandy Skelaney. Outreach programs for children trapped in the sex trade and a shelter are possible next steps, although funding is pending for these measures.

Kristi House's mission is to provide a healing environment for sexually abused children and their families at no cost. Kristi House services include case management, therapy, referral, transportation, advocacy and emergency assistance. The organization receives a little over half of its program budget from public sources; the remainder is raised through the private sector to provide critical services that government funds do not fully cover.

Visit www.kristihouse.org for more information about Kristi House.

Kristi House is centrally located on the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital campus at 1265 NW 12th Avenue, and with a satellite office in south Miami-Dade at 152nd Street and U.S. 1, and a north satellite office at State Road 441 and 185th Street. Founded in 1996, Kristi House has served more than 6,000 victims of child sexual abuse and their families. Thousands more are reached every year with education and prevention outreach programs. Services include case management, therapy, referral, transportation, advocacy and emergency assistance.

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