

## **National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> Introduced at 2011 National Leadership Meeting**

*Meryl Levine, VP of Special Initiatives, Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Inc.  
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This year's annual Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Inc. National Leadership Meeting was no ordinary meeting for the many Parent Leaders, program staff board members and volunteers attending from accredited Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> organizations from across the country. We introduced the new groundbreaking National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> (1-855-4A PARENT) at the annual meeting held on January 31-February 1, 2011 in Washington, DC. The launch of the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> complemented the theme of this important national meeting, *Stand With Families: Prevention Strategies that Work*. Tanya Long, member of the Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Inc. Board of Directors, stated, "We are very proud to be launching this vital National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> and create lasting benefits to families and communities. In Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup>, Asking for Help is a Sign of Strength<sup>®</sup> and this is the message that we will promote so that the 149 million parents in this county know the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> is there for them.

Throughout the National Leadership Meeting, we hosted specialized plenary sessions and workshops to introduce and promote the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup>. During the opening plenary, Corrine Graffunder, DrPH, MPH, Director, National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy, Health Reform Implementation Office, Office of the Associate Director for Policy, shared exciting updates about the Affordable Care Act, and the important work that the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council is doing to "improve the health and quality of life for individuals and families and communities by moving the nation from a focus on sickness and disease to one based on wellness and prevention." There was lots of discussion that followed relating to the timeliness of the of the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> opening and how it will be a critical and valuable prevention resource to help strengthen the health and well-being of families nationwide. Our strong and long-term partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to be vital to our work in strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment. Later that day in a lively lunch plenary, Nadine Gilden, Creative Director, Curious Light, stimulated the audience to brainstorm effective strategies to help promote and market the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> through social media. She demonstrated how participants can easily use Facebook and Twitter to help us spread the word. A more detailed workshop, "The National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup>: From There to Here," presented by Art Hernandez, Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Inc. National Parent Leader, Jodi Doane, Helpline<sup>®</sup> Program Operations Manager, and Dr. Sandra Williams, Vice President of Programs, highlighted how parents and caregivers can actually call the Helpline to get emotional support from trained National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> Advocates and become empowered to resolve their issues and receive referrals as needed. Participants also learned about the new National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> website ([nationalparenthelpline.org](http://nationalparenthelpline.org)) that offers comprehensive online parenting resources and a place for parents and caregivers to share their experiences to build a sense of community among parents to help others.

Other important highlights at the National Leadership Meeting included honoring the outstanding recipients of the Jolly K. and Juanita Chávez Awards. Tanya Long, Board of

Directors, presented the Jolly K. Award to **Donald Pickens**, an adoptive parent of a child with special needs from California, and Chair, California State Parent Team, who exemplifies the courage, tenacity and strong Parent Leadership displayed by the founding parent of Parents Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Inc. Freddie Gardner, Chair, Board of Directors, presented **Peggy Canning** with the Juanita Chávez Award for her tireless work and support in promoting and implementing shared leadership<sup>®</sup>. Peggy has been a dedicated volunteer for 11 years with Parents Anonymous of Plattsburgh, New York.

The National Leadership Meeting culminated with a special reception held at the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center to celebrate the official opening of the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> on February 1, 2011. Congressional members, staffers and other important dignitaries joined us for this landmark event and were given Champion for Families Awards including Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, Administration on Children Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Colonel Gina Grosso, Commander of the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, and Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Robert Menendez (D-NJ). In her opening remarks, Dr. Pion-Berlin, President and Chief Executive Officer, expressed heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of the wonderful individuals, organizations and public officials who worked with us to make the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> become a reality. Commission Samuels, stated, “Too often, even the best parents and caregivers feel isolated and don’t know where to turn for support. By providing a vital resource to connect parents to the supports they need, the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> will empower families and strengthen communities across the nation.” Senator Wyden illustrated his commitment by stating: “...This is a nationwide mobilization. We cannot let any more young people fall between the cracks. We need to mobilize parents, help them to meet their needs in a tough economy.” Others who have been key National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> supporters include: Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Charles Schumer (D-NY), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA). A special visit was made to Senator Barbara Boxer’s office, to present her with the Champion for Families Award. Please follow these links to Senator Boxer’s [press release](#) and [event picture](#).

The combination of the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> launch and the 2011 National Leadership Meeting proved to be an amazing experience for all! Everyone talked about returning home truly energized, and ready to spread the word to others that the National Parent Helpline<sup>®</sup> is here to provide help and support.