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St. John's Home and D.A. Blodgett for Children Announce Merger

Grand Rapids, MI – September 21, 2009 – Two of the oldest, most respected child welfare agencies in western Michigan are pleased to announce they are merging into one comprehensive organization to ensure a quality continuum of services to vulnerable children.

D.A. Blodgett for Children and St. John's Home, founded in 1887 and 1889 respectively, are merging their organizations. "Our two agencies have served the needs of children in our community for over 120 years. We both share a commitment to doing what is in the best interest of each child," says Sharon Loughridge, Executive Director of D.A. Blodgett for Children.

"Our philosophies about mission and vision for the children we both serve are so similar," states Mark Thomson, President/CEO of St. John's Home. "Our two agencies have always had a very collaborative working relationship and this seemed like the next logical step."

The two agencies view this merger as a proactive way to address multiple issues impacting children and Michigan's child welfare system. The merged organization will be the only private provider of a full continuum of comprehensive services for children and families in Kent County. A continuum of seamless, innovative care and uninterrupted treatment for children will assure increased success in securing a permanent home for every child. In addition the challenging economic climate, which continues to exert pressure for cost containment and efficient service delivery, means providers are going to experience additional challenges in 2010 based on changes to Michigan's child welfare laws and processes. By merging now, D.A. Blodgett for Children and St. John's Home will be well-positioned to meet the needs of children and the requirements within the forthcoming child welfare structure.

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This new agency will be able to meet virtually any placement need a child could require. It will also improve the quality and speed of transitions from residential to foster care and then home, or to an adoptive placement. “We anticipate this will position our agency as a leader in achieving strong and timely outcomes for children,” said Loughridge.

Both agencies are leaders in their respective areas of expertise. As the largest provider of foster care in Kent County and a leader in providing adoptive homes for children, D.A. Blodgett for Children also provides more foster homes for teens than any other provider in Kent County. St. John’s Home is one of the principal providers of residential services to youth in Kent County, and also operates the KidsFirst county shelter for all children ages 0 – 17, accepting placements from Child Protective Services, the police, and all private agencies across Kent County.

Loughridge will continue on as Executive Director of the merged agency, and Thomson will take on the role of Director of Special Projects, assisting Loughridge in implementing innovative services for children and their parents. Both campuses will remain in use to serve the community, and both campuses will continue to use their existing names. Loughridge acknowledges, “We owe so much to our founding family, the Blodgetts. We want to continue to recognize their incredible contribution to this community. People know who we are and respect what we do under that name.” St. John’s Home feels the same way about its history. “Our name is synonymous with what we do in this community,” affirmed Thomson.

Loughridge is confident that there will be both administrative and operational efficiencies moving forward, and that staffing levels will not be impacted because the two agencies provide complementary, not duplicative services.

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About D.A. Blodgett for Children: D.A. Blodgett for Children has provided comprehensive services for children and their families, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, foster care, adoption, mentoring and in-home family support, for more than 122 years, serving over 3,000 children annually. The agency is always focused on what is best for the child. To learn more, please visit www.dablodgett.org.

About St. John’s Home: St. John’s Home is a Grand Rapids, Michigan-based nonprofit agency that provides a variety of award-winning services for troubled children and teenagers in Grand Rapids and throughout West Michigan. Since its founding in 1889, St. John’s Home has served more than 15,000 boys and girls through a variety of programs, including in-house residential treatment, emergency shelter through KidsFirst, and specialized interventions for youth. Learn more at www.stjohnshome.org.