

CONTACT:

Margaret Tatar
Executive Director, Public Affairs
714.246.8796 (office)
mtatar@caloptima.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS CONNECT
TO BUILD HEALTHIER ORANGE COUNTY**

Annual Community Alliances Conference Offers Education, Fosters Collaboration

ORANGE, Calif. (Aug. 8, 2011) — To celebrate and deepen its partnerships with community-based organizations, CalOptima convened the fifth annual Community Alliances Conference last month. The event brought together more than 350 professionals to promote networking and learning among health care providers, social services groups, policy makers and community advocates.

While acknowledging the difficult economic environment and the uncertain health care landscape, event speakers urged attendees to work creatively to forge a strong network of health and social services for at-risk Orange County residents. “You have to be proactive and be big thinkers for the future,” said Lynn Daucher, former director of the California Department of Aging and former Assemblywoman. “You have to figure out how to turn lemons into lemonade.”



At the event, Daucher was honored with CalOptima’s Community Leader Award for her tireless service to California seniors and residents in Orange County’s 72nd District. She accepted the award from Orange County Fourth District Supervisor Shawn Nelson, left, and CalOptima CEO Richard Chambers, right.

Chambers’ keynote speech focused on how Orange County and CalOptima are preparing for implementation of health care reform in 2014. The expansion of coverage will boost Medi-Cal membership from 11 percent of Orange County residents to 17 percent, adding about 140,000 people to CalOptima’s Medi-Cal program. That growth is not without challenges, Chambers said. “The Medicaid program has a big bulls-eye on it in Washington right now as legislators struggle with where to get budget cuts,” he said. “The cuts they want to make may help today, but the cuts conflict with what is planned for 2014.”

In the tough environment, Chambers highlighted innovations that can bridge gaps and foster efficient use of resources, such as integrating behavioral and physical health programs, creating

managed systems of care, and extending the use of technology. “Your commitment as community-based organizations is key,” he said. “Stay informed and share your ideas.”

In his keynote address, John Ramey, executive director of Local Health Plans of California, explained the dynamics of health reform. “Coverage expansion is the first step toward cost control,” he said. “Everybody has to be in to start to get cost containment in health care.” Ramey also emphasized the importance of the audience’s contribution to health care for those in need via their community-based organizations. “Folks like you have worked and struggled to make the system work for people, but that doesn’t mean there will be more resources in the future,” he said. “Stay with it; keep after it.”

The conference included a networking activity so attendees could meet and talk about the services offered by their respective community organizations. A wide variety of groups were present, including many focused on:

- **Medical conditions**, such as American Cancer Society and AIDS Services Foundation Orange County,
- **Ethnicities**, such as Pacific Islander Health Partnership and Orange County Korean American Health Information and Education Center, and
- **Age groups**, such as Boys & Girls Club and Community SeniorServ.

Breakout sessions addressed topics ranging from access to health care; advocacy for individuals and nonprofit organizations; social media use in community-based organizations; nutrition guidelines; and integrated services for seniors and people with disabilities.

The event concluded with a big bang as attendees experienced HealthRhythms, a research-based therapeutic drumming protocol by Remo Inc. Led by trained facilitators, the crowd made powerful music with drums of all sizes, shakers, bells and tambourines, creating an energy of unity in the room.



About CalOptima

CalOptima is a county organized health system providing publicly funded health coverage programs for low-income families, seniors and people with disabilities in Orange County, Calif. CalOptima serves its 421,000 members with a network of more than 6,700 primary care doctors and specialists, as well as 28 hospitals. CalOptima provides access to quality health care through three programs, including Medi-Cal, Healthy Families Program and OneCare (HMO SNP).

###