



For Immediate Release

June 22, 2009

Media Contact:

Kristina Schake 310-779-6038

Marissa Moss 310-926-7365

First Lady Michelle Obama and California First Lady Maria Shriver Kick Off 2009 National Conference on Volunteering & Service with Playground Service Project

Shriver to Present First Annual Governor & First Lady's Medals for Service, Join CaliforniaVolunteers to Build First Fully Intergenerational Playground in the Country, and Participate in Conference's Opening General Session

SAN FRANCISCO – California First Lady Maria Shriver will continue her dedication to encouraging all Californians to serve their communities today by presenting the first annual Governor and First Lady's Medals for Service, joining 500 volunteers to construct the first fully volunteer-built intergenerational playground in the nation, and being interviewed by Be The Change Inc. Founder and CEO Alan Khazei about her groundbreaking service initiatives during the Opening General Session of the 2009 National Conference on Volunteering & Service. With 4,500 expected attendees, the conference is the largest gathering in the world of leaders of the service and volunteering sector.

Shriver's presentation of the first annual Governor and First Lady's Medals for service at the Intercontinental Hotel will include recipients of the following awards: Volunteer of the Year, Business Volunteer Program of the Year, Nonprofit Leader of the Year and Social Innovation Spotlight Award.

First Lady Michelle Obama, who shares Maria Shriver's commitment to service and who has dedicated her career and her current platform to encouraging community involvement, will join her at Bret Harte Elementary School for the playground service project. This event will serve as the official kick-off for the 2009 national service conference and mark Shriver's 31st playground build throughout California. The project is sponsored by CaliforniaVolunteers, the California state office charged with increasing the number of Californians who volunteer, led by the nation's first state cabinet secretary dedicated to service, Karen Baker. Shriver serves as the honorary chair of the organization.

"Real change doesn't come from the top down, it comes from the bottom up – from citizens organizing and mobilizing and serving the nation that they love," said First Lady Michelle Obama. "Kaboom's vision of having community volunteers build playgrounds for kids within walking distance of their homes will not only help these children live healthier lives, but it is also a terrific example of this Administration's belief that service has the power to transform individuals, communities, and this country."

"This is more than a play space, this is a testament to the fact that Californians of any age can unite around the concept of play, serve their communities and create an inclusive environment that transcends age diversity," said First Lady Maria Shriver. "This trailblazing play space truly embraces the philosophy that playground lessons last a lifetime and we never outgrow play."

The play space project is part of the California Volunteers' Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning initiative which works to engage California's youth in service to honor the legacy of Cesar E. Chavez. Since the program began, California Volunteers has established nearly 100 afterschool service clubs in Title I middle schools and sponsored volunteer-built playspaces throughout the state.

The playground project was planned using an innovative community-build model led by national nonprofit KaBOOM!, which has coordinated construction of more than 1,600 play spaces across North America. Planning for the project began in late April, when kids from the school and the surrounding community, parents, seniors and representatives from the local Alzheimer's association met with project organizers to share ideas for their dream play spaces.

This play space marks the first fully intergenerational volunteer-build playground, with kids, parents, seniors and Alzheimer's experts engaged in every step of the planning and construction process. An edible garden will feature a farmer's market stand, allowing kids and seniors from the community to create a micro enterprise, sell vegetables and raise money for the school. The playground will be constructed in collaboration and the Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, which continues Shriver's advocacy on behalf of families struggling with Alzheimer's disease.

Later in the day, at approximately 5:30 p.m., Shriver will be interviewed during the Opening General Session of the National Conference on Volunteering and Service by Be the Change, Inc. Founder and CEO Alan Khazei about her innovative service initiatives. Under Shriver's leadership, California Volunteers became the first state service commission to be led by a cabinet secretary dedicated to service, launched the California Green Corps and the nation's largest online volunteer matching network in the country and is developing the California Volunteers Disaster Corps, designed to fully integrate volunteers into the state's emergency management system.

California Volunteers

California Volunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives to increase the number of Californians involved with service and volunteering, including the state AmeriCorps program, California Citizen Corps and the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning. Through the innovative Web site, CaliforniaVolunteers.org, individuals and families can find more than 45,000 volunteer opportunities throughout the state involving the arts, education, animals, disaster preparedness, the environment and other areas of interest. Karen Baker, the nation's first state cabinet secretary of service and volunteering leads the organization and First Lady Maria Shriver serves as the honorary chairperson. For more information, please visit www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

National Conference on Volunteering & Service

The 2009 National Conference on Volunteering and Service, taking place June 22-24 in the heart of San Francisco, is the world's largest gathering of volunteer and service leaders from the nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors. The conference taps into the renewed enthusiasm for volunteering to meet critical community needs and participate in vital conversations about the future of service and volunteering in America. Learn about the historic Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and its implications for the nonprofit and volunteer sector. Come away inspired, refreshed and energized! This year's theme — "Civic. Energy. Generation." — reflects the tremendous excitement in our nation today as people of all ages and backgrounds unify in a powerful movement to bring about social change. For additional information, please visit: www.volunteeringandservice.org.

###