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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“KEEPING KING’S DREAM ALIVE” EVENT **Mon., Jan 21st, 12-1 pm at El Cajon’s Promenade Park**

El Cajon – A coalition of East County community leaders have announced plans to co-sponsor “Keeping Dr. King’s Dream Alive,” a historic event honoring the legacy of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. The public is welcome to attend the free event on Monday, January 21st from 12 noon to 1 pm at Promenade Park on Main Street, just east of Magnolia in downtown El Cajon.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is best known as a leader in the civil rights movement. But King also spoke out and provided inspiration in other fields including voting rights, supporting rights of working people, and ending the Viet Nam War. He was the recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

Rev. Roland Slade, pastor at Meridian Baptist Church in El Cajon, will speak on ‘Living the Dream’ to honor Rev. King’s legacy. Pastor Sharon Connors, Christ Church Unity in El Cajon, will also speak.

Rev. King’s legacy inspired changes on many fronts. Yet many problems that he fought to resolve are once again in the news, and some hard-fought rights have been weakened. Speakers at the event will draw parallels between King’s era and today.

“Today, the people of America need hope and are seeking change,” said Vickie Butcher, J.D. recipient of the 2007 NAACP Humanitarian Award and candidate for the 52nd Congressional district. Butcher, who will speak on ‘Inspiring hope for the future.’ “Our nation is once again divided by war,” she said. “Protections for working people have been eroded. Middle class families are struggling to make ends meet, and poor folks are struggling just to survive. The rights of all citizens to cast votes and have their votes counted are also at risk, and these things must change.” Butcher was inspired after meeting Rev. King as a teen to help integrate diners and restaurants in her community. She added, “As we honor Rev. King’s life of dedication, we can and we must speak out to protect the rights of all citizens and work together to restore peace and prosperity for our nation, our world, and our community.”

Clara Harris, a consultant specializing in race/human relations, will call on community members to remember King’s teachings of peaceful conflict resolution and to stand up against discrimination in East County, which has seen a rise in hate crimes as the region has become increasingly integrated.

“Once more bigotry related violence is rearing its ugly head in East County,” said Harris, who will speak on ‘Healing racial conflicts in our community.’ “We cannot remain silent as our brothers of color are targeted for assaults. How long before someone is murdered as a result?” Three recent brutal incidents stand out as glaring examples, she noted. “A white man with a swastika tattooed on his chest attacked a black man who had stepped outside a bar for a cigarette. The victim suffered brain damage as a result. About a month later, a pair of skinheads beat up two black men, one of them a Marine, at a gas station. A week after that, two skinheads attacked a Latino laborer outside a liquor store.”

Harris served as Executive Director of Heartland Human Relations and Fair Housing Association for 19 years. She has also worked with local governments, law enforcement, education, and others to foster understanding, cultural awareness and hate crimes prevention. She holds a BA degree in Social Welfare and an MS in Counseling from San Diego State University.

Ken Karan, Esq., will speak on “Protecting our votes—and making sure that every vote counts.” A nationally-prominent election integrity attorney, Karan has led high-profile cases to protect voters’ rights locally. He is Executive Director Psephos, a San Diego-based nonprofit supporting election integrity and prevention of voter disenfranchisement. In this briefing, Karan will provide an update on the current state of our elections (including security issues involving electronic voting machines), answer questions, and tell you what steps you can take on Election Day to protect your voting rights.