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Article Launched: 04/29/2009 10:00 PM PDT

Charity that helps struggling women and children to honor volunteers, groups

SAN BERNARDINO – The Time for Change Foundation will honor two individuals, one nonprofit organization and one government agency at its fourth annual awards luncheon today.

The foundation operates two shelters for homeless women and children in San Bernardino.

The Spring Time Bloom awards ceremony at the National Orange Show Events Center in San Bernardino, is also the foundation's biggest annual fundraiser. The foundation relies on private donations and grants to fund its programs, said Kim Carter, its founder and executive director.

At the event, Rabbi Hillel Cohn, who has ministered to families for nearly four decades, will receive the foundation's Humanitarian Award. He served as rabbi of Congregation Emanu El in San Bernardino from 1963 to 2001 and is now its rabbi emeritus.

Margaret Hill, a lifelong educator, community advocate and volunteer, will be honored with the Community Service Award for her charity work with the foundation and other local nonprofit organizations such as San Bernardino Black Culture Foundation, Campfire USA, East Valley YMCA, and Community Hospital of San Bernardino. She is assistant superintendent of the San Bernardino County Schools.

Public Service Award

The Public Service Award will be presented to the San Bernardino County Public Defender's Office for providing free legal services to the foundation's clients and other low-income and disenfranchised people in the community through outreach programs. A key service the public defender's office provides is helping them expunge old, minor convictions from their record thereby improving their chances of getting employment, education, housing and public assistance.

For its programs focused on improving the lives of poor and low-income black communities in the region, the Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches will receive the Ramos Family Spirit of Compassion Award. The group has 54 member churches with congregations totaling more than 7,000.

During the event, Kent Paxton, board member of the county's Children's Fund, will present a report on the county's needy and at-risk children. Past clients will tell their stories of successful transition to an independent life with the foundation's help. County District Attorney Michael Ramos will be master of ceremonies.

The foundation opened its first women's shelter in 2002. A second shelter, for women and children, was opened three years later.

The foundation's clients include women recovering from physical, mental and substance abuse, or have just come out of prison. Its programs are geared toward helping them rebuild their lives and become independent, productive citizens.

Last year, the foundation served 65 women and 17 children, Carter said.

Applications for the foundation's services jumped nearly 40 percent in the last year. "Women who have lost their jobs and houses because of the economic downturn are coming to us too. We have a three-month-long waitlist," she said.

Hard Times

Donations, however, have declined. The recession has left the foundation, like many other nonprofit groups, struggling to stay afloat, Carter said.

The foundation suffered a further setback when burglars stole property estimated at \$15,000 from its North Arrowhead Avenue office in San Bernardino earlier this month. Carter said the items were not insured. The foundation is seeking donations to replace them.

Carter overcame challenges of abuse, addiction and incarceration with the help of Bloomington-based Cedar House Rehabilitation Center. "Through the center's programs, I met a lot of people, angels, who helped me turn my life around. I believe, it's very important to have access to people who can help you along," she said.

Carter is recognized as an advocate for disadvantaged women and has received many awards for her work.