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**For Immediate Release**

## **SECOND AME CHURCH HONORS LOS ANGELES HOMELESS SERVICES AUTHORITY FOR EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS**

Tree of Life Ceremony Recognizes LAHSA as the Public Agency of the Year and Executive Director Michael Arnold as Community Leader of the Year

Los Angeles, CA, July 23, 2010 – The Second African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church hosted a tree planting ceremony this past Sunday honoring the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) for its commitment to reducing and ending homelessness in Los Angeles County. Originally celebrated on Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Community Witness Sunday and postponed due to inclement weather, the ceremony recognized LAHSA as the “Public Agency of the Year” and Executive Director Michael Arnold as “Community Leader of the Year.” Two trees – a Crape Myrtle and Plum Tree – were the fixtures of the ceremony and backdrop for a larger announcement of “greening” initiatives taking place in South Los Angeles. The trees were planted near the corner of the Second AME Church located at 5500 S. Hoover St.

LAHSA was honored with the “Tree of Life” Award for providing quality services and working for permanent housing solutions for homeless residents of South Los Angeles. The ceremony was part of the Green Justice Connection, launched in February as a partnership with Progressive Christians Uniting and the Center for the Empowerment of Families. The initiative is designed to advocate for “Green Justice” in South Central Los Angeles so that residents may be prepared for entry into the anticipated green job sector, have access to healthy lifestyles through availability of fresh produce, clean water and safe outdoor exercise areas and reduce their carbon footprint through solarization, weatherization and appliance upgrades. Honorees are recognized for their ability to affect and implement meaningful policy changes for communities in need.

“It’s gratifying for me personally and for our agency to receive this award because I know how committed our staff, partners, key stakeholders and commissioners are to providing real solutions for the men, women and children who are homeless in Los Angeles,” said Executive Director Michael Arnold. “LAHSA will continue to work hard and live up to the expectations of this award by being a stronger community partner and advocate for providing long-term, sustainable housing.”

Also recognized for her commitment to community service was Councilwoman Jan Perry of the Ninth District (Bunker Hill, Little Tokyo and South Los Angeles) who gave some remarks about the importance of “green initiatives” in South Los Angeles and the need for increased efforts to house the homeless. Perry is a staunch supporter of homeless prevention in her district often witnessing the outreach and intake efforts of LAHSA staff in areas with high concentrations of homeless in the Downtown Los Angeles Skid Row area.

“I believe in building and expanding permanent supportive housing because that really is the only way to truly help those in our community who are homeless,” said Councilwoman Perry, adding that “LAHSA’s Emergency Response Team outreach workers are the unsung heroes and true delivery system to those that need help.”

According to LAHSA’s 2009 Homeless Count Report, South Los Angeles had approximately 8,514 homeless adults and family members. Twenty-five percent of the homeless population in South Los Angeles lived in transitional shelters. South Los Angeles has the second highest concentration of homeless people county-wide, second only to the Metro Los Angeles area.

Second AME will hold special quarterly services until all 12 of the remaining tree liners are filled. The next “Tree of Life” award will be announced on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

“Turning a ghetto into a garden is a matter of planting a tree of hope in the hearts and psyches of those who really believe in the tree of life,” said LAHSA Commissioner Rev. Cecil L. Murray. “The seed takes its nutrients from hydration, perspiration and inspiration. The ground, of course, is God.”

*The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles created in 1993 to address the problems of homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAHSA plans, funds and administers programs that assist homeless individuals and families in their transition to permanent housing. LAHSA is the lead agency in the HUD-funded Los Angeles Continuum of Care and coordinates and manages over \$70 million dollars annually in federal, state, county and city funds for programs providing shelter, housing and services to homeless persons. Additionally, LAHSA partners with the city and the county to integrate services and housing opportunities to ensure wide distribution of service and housing options. LAHSA funds agencies that address many underserved homeless populations including battered women and their children, persons struggling with chronic homelessness, veterans, youth transitioning from foster care, and individuals with mental health needs.*

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