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## News Release

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### **VA San Diego Healthcare System Honored at 2012 Spirit of Planetree Awards**

Planetree, an internationally recognized leader in developing and implementing patient-centered care practices, will honor the Department of Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) for its Warrior to Soul Mate program during Planetree's annual conference in Palm Desert, Calif., Sept. 30-Oct. 3.

"Warrior to Soul Mate is all about providing support for the important family relationships of a Veteran," said Jeffrey T. Gering, director/CEO of VASDHS. "We're very proud to have the right environment and staff to facilitate this program."

Warrior to Soul Mate is a free couples enrichment retreat for Veterans. Couples attending the retreat spend a weekend at a local resort engaging in tools to help them connect through communication growth, relationship management and emotional wisdom.

According to Planetree, the Spirit of Planetree Awards were created to promote patient-centered care by publicly recognizing individuals who personalize and demystify the health care experience for others, as well as programs and services that support extraordinary achievement in patient-centered care. The awards ceremony will be held Oct. 3 at the J.W. Marriott Desert Springs Resort in Palm Desert.

Caregivers, physician champions and animal therapy awards are presented as well as best practice awards for programs representing each of the 10 components of the Planetree model of care. A committee evaluates each program based upon criteria such as innovation, sustainability, customer impact, and outcomes measurement.

Each year the Planetree Annual Conference brings together caregivers across the care continuum—CEOs, physicians, long-term care specialists, academics, patient advocates,

nurses, executives, Veterans Affairs administrators, and many others—committed to the implementation of patient -centered approaches that encourage patients and families to engage in their care plans.

In addition to the awards ceremony and several distinguished keynote speakers, the conference will feature more than 100 workshops providing a forum to discuss practical strategies for implementing and fostering a culture that inspires and enables caregivers to transform the health care experience by engaging patients and families. VA representatives will be making several presentations highlighting Care for Caregivers, integrative therapies, adaptive sports, and wellness, among other topics.

In 2011, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) selected Planetree to collaborate with its Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation in the development of the VA's own patient-centered care model for Veterans who receive health care services at VA's more than 1,000 points of care across the nation.

For more information on Warrior to Soul Mate, please visit:

<http://www.sandiego.va.gov/services/marriageretreat.asp>