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CONTACT: SAMHSA Press Office
240-276-2130

Sangeetha Sarma
301-395-5227

Michael Phelps and Allison Schmitt Named Honorary Chairpersons for SAMHSA's National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2017

Gold Medalists Phelps and Schmitt Help Highlight the Importance of Integrating Physical and Behavioral Health Care for Children and Young Adults

WASHINGTON—Olympic champions Michael Phelps, the world's most decorated Olympian, and Allison Schmitt, an eight-time Olympic medalist, are partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) over the next year to focus on the needs of children, youth, and young adults who experience behavioral health disorders, such as mental illnesses and addictions.

Phelps and Schmitt will serve as Honorary Chairpersons of SAMHSA's National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (Awareness Day) 2017 national event: "Partnering for Help and Hope." Teammates and personal friends, Phelps and Schmitt have spoken candidly about their respective struggles with behavioral health, and how they have supported each other through difficult times. The duo will collaborate with SAMHSA to promote children's behavioral health initiatives.

The Awareness Day 2017 national event will take place on Thursday, May 4, at The George Washington University School of Media & Public Affairs Jack Morton Auditorium. Phelps and Schmitt will receive SAMHSA's Special Recognition Award for speaking openly about their behavioral health challenges and encouraging youth to lead healthy and active lives.

"Children and young adults often look to athletes as role models for leading healthy lives. By speaking about treatment and recovery, Michael and Allison are helping youth view behavioral health as an important part of their overall health," said Kana Enomoto, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary.

"Allison and I are excited to be a part of this national effort. As we travel all over the country, we're often asked about our training, diets, and routines for staying fit," said Michael Phelps. Being involved in Awareness Day and with SAMHSA gives us the chance to emphasize that paying attention to mental health is another important component of growing up healthy."

The event will feature interactive panel discussions about understanding the connection between physical and behavioral health; improving communication between primary care providers, behavioral health providers, and youth and families; and supporting the mental health needs of youth who experience chronic illness.

SAMHSA will webcast the event live on www.samhsa.gov/children, with NBC4 Washington and its sister stations throughout the country also livestreaming the event on their websites. Viewers can join the online conversation using #HeroesofHope and pose questions to onstage panelists via Twitter and email during the event.

For more information about Awareness Day and children's mental health, visit www.samhsa.gov/children.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.