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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CANINE COMPANIONS ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OCEANSIDE, CA The Southwest Regional Center of Canine Companions for Independence has a new executive director as of December 2011. *Canine Companions is a nonprofit organization that enhances the lives of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships.* Barbara Barrow has an extensive background in nonprofit administration and development. She replaces Linda Valliant, who retired in late November after nine years of service to Canine Companions.

Most recently, Barrow served as executive director of the American Heart Association's Inland Empire Division. Prior to that, Barrow was director of strategic planning and special projects at the San Diego State University (SDSU) Research Foundation. Previously, Barrow was executive director of the SDSU Alumni Association and SDSU director of annual giving. Before entering the nonprofit sector, Barrow played golf on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour for ten years. "Ms. Barrow has excellent qualifications," says Corey Hudson, CEO of Canine Companions. "Her leadership will result in even greater accomplishments for Canine Companions' Southwest Region, with increased assistance dog placements and funds raised to fulfill our mission."

Barrow learned about Canine Companions by reading "A Big Little Life: A Memoir of a Joyful Dog" by Dean Koontz. Koontz and his wife, Gerda, are Canine Companions' Southwest Region campus benefactors. The book is about the retired service dog they adopted from Canine Companions. "Through 'A Big Little Life,' I learned about Canine Companions, its mission and that it is located in Oceanside," explains Barrow. "As a dog owner and dog lover, Canine Companions' mission of providing highly trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities really resonated with me. I immediately wanted to get involved."

As executive director of Canine Companions in the Southwest Region, Barrow plans to meet or exceed all program and fundraising goals for 2012. "I am so excited to be a part of the team at Canine Companions," Barrow says. "I've witnessed how Canine Companions assistance dogs transform the lives of their human partners with the practical and emotional benefits they bring. I've seen the joy on our clients' faces. It is a privilege and an honor to work for such an incredible organization!" Canine Companions assistance dogs are trained for two years in up to 50 commands before they are ready to become someone's 24/7 helper. Thanks to Canine Companions' generous supporters, the dogs, their training and ongoing follow-up support are provided free of charge to children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities.

About Canine Companions for Independence:

Canine Companions for Independence provides highly-trained assistance dogs to children and adults with disabilities. Established in 1975, Canine Companions has five regional training centers across the country, including the Southwest Regional Center in Oceanside. Canine Companions is recognized worldwide for the excellence of its dogs, and the quality and longevity of the matches it makes between dogs and people. For more information, visit www.cci.org or call 1-800-572-BARK.

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