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**September 29 – For Immediate Release**

This Event is for the Dogs  
Run and Fun Walk to Raise Awareness of Pets on Mental Health

**Rochester, Minn.** – Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center and Paws and Claws Humane Society are collaborating to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual *New Leash on Life*, a 5K run and 3K fun walk to help raise awareness of mental illness and the positive role that pets can play. The fundraising event is being held Saturday, October 1, 2011, at Silver Lake Park.

“The *New Leash on Life* event is focused on educating people about mental illness and the benefits that pet ownership has on people’s mental health,” said Dave Cook, chief executive officer for Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center. “Studies show the positive impact that dogs and other pets have on reducing loneliness, fighting depression and coping with stress.”

Cook added that benefits are not restricted to mental health. Research demonstrates that pet owners have fewer doctors’ visits and have a higher survival rate after serious illnesses.

Event features include:

- 5K dog run
- 3K dog walk
- Awards for large, medium and small dog classes
- T-shirts for all participants
- Sponsor booths with give-aways
- Live music and entertainment

“A companion animal can often help people with mental or physical health issues,” said Gay Eastman, technology committee chairwoman for Paws and Claws. “People who have pets, and dog owners in particular, exercise more and have a reduced risk for heart disease. This walk and run really encapsulates the totality of benefits offered by owning a pet.”

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and the activities start at 9:00 a.m.

**About Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center**

Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center enhances the quality of life for residents in southeastern Minnesota by serving as a community resource for the understanding and treatment of behavioral health and substance use disorders. The organization collaborates with government agencies, schools, non-profit groups and others to provide programs dedicated to improving the mental health of adults, adolescents and children. Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center is a private, non-profit organization serving Olmsted and Fillmore counties. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.zumbromhc.org](http://www.zumbromhc.org) or call 507-289-2089.

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