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Contact:
Barbara Pressman
Director of Press Relations
818-642-7444, 818-988-7444
pressmanpr@adelphia.net or
Toshiko Dignam
Program Manager (Utah Office)
801-596-3317, 720-771-0170
toshiko@onehearttibet.org

**CHINESE GOVERNMENT AWARDS AMERICAN N.G.O. CONTRACT
TO ADDRESS HIGH MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY RATES
IN TIBET**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – On February 20, 2006, in Lhasa, Tibet, One H.E.A.R.T. (Health, Education And Research in Tibet), an American N.G.O. that focuses on improving maternal and newborn survival in rural Tibet, signed a three-year contract with the Foreign Affairs Office of the Tibet Autonomous Region to continue and expand its work there.¹ Dr. Gelek, the director of the Lhasa Prefecture Health Bureau, who signed the contract for China, believes the new ideas that One H.E.A.R.T. has brought rural health workers about safe delivery practices and safe motherhood are having an impact. "By working together, we can make a big difference in maternal and child mortality," said Gelek.

According to Arlene Samen, founder and executive director of One H.E.A.R.T., which has been active there since 1998, fewer than 10 international agencies have permission to work in Tibet, and only one other works in the maternal/child health area. "We are very fortunate to gain permission from the Chinese government to continue and expand our

¹ In Tibet, one in 10 babies is said to die within the first 28 days of life, and maternal death rates are believed to be among the highest in the world, because of a lack of skilled birth attendants at delivery.

work in Tibet, and expand to other counties. We can now double our service population to 80,000 people, including 1,500 mothers and newborns whose very survival depends on our services. With the go-ahead from China, and a recent \$100,000 grant from the Ronald McDonald House Charities, our dream of eliminating the needless loss of precious lives that occurs in Tibet during childbirth is becoming a reality.”

The American international non-governmental organization provides the simple training and medical supplies necessary to prevent a majority of the birthing-related deaths that occur daily in Tibet, through its three programs: Skilled Birth Attendant Training; Pregnancy And Village Outreach Tibet; and Physician Training. According to Gelek, “One H.E.A.R.T.’s maternal and newborn public health programs appear to have a statistically significant, positive effect on neonatal and maternal mortality in Medro Gongkar County.”

Since an official Chinese medical-educational delegation of Tibetan doctors to the U.S. in 2004, the local health bureau in Lhasa has become One H.E.A.R.T.’s biggest supporter. Seeing successful high-risk, maternal-infant health-delivery programs in rural, high-altitude settings in Utah – similar to those in Tibet – has caused them to change their views and medical practices. “These doctors now recognize the importance of improving health providers’ skills at the village level, and are collaborating with us in our efforts to do just that. Most importantly, they are behind our work, and are now true partners in the important endeavor of turning back the tragic tide of maternal and newborn death,” says Samen.

One H.E.A.R.T.

An American charitable organization, One H.E.A.R.T., (Health, Education And Research in Tibet) provides maternal-newborn health programs in Tibet, with the aim of improving the

survival rates of mothers and infants there. One H.E.A.R.T. was founded by Arlene Samen, RN, CNP, after seeing the urgent need for basic health services for pregnant women and their infants during a visit to the region. With headquarters in Lhasa, Tibet, and an office in Salt Lake City, Utah, the 18-person agency has provided essential medical training and preventative health care programs since 1998. For more information, call 801-596-3317, or go to www.onehearttibet.org.