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**UCLA SEMEL INSTITUTE FOR NEUROSCIENCE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR
RECEPTION LAUNCHES THE HELP GROUP – UCLA AUTISM RESEARCH
ALLIANCE**

Los Angeles – On Monday, September 10, 2007, the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior held a special reception to mark the launch of The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance. This spirited occasion was hosted by Dr. Peter C. Whybrow, director of the Semel Institute, and Dr. James McCracken, director, Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at UCLA. The event was attended by UCLA and The Help Group colleagues, faculty and friends, and took place at the Semel Institute on the UCLA campus.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex brain disorder that strikes in early childhood, disrupting a child's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and often accompanied by acute behavioral challenges. The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance is an innovative partnership between the two organizations dedicated to enhancing and expanding clinical research, education, and treatment into ASD, and to contribute to the development, greater understanding and use of best practice models by educators and clinicians.

Whybrow, McCracken, Dr. Barbara Firestone, President & CEO of The Help Group and Vice Chair of the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, and Dr. Liz Laugeson, Director of The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance, shared their remarks about this exciting endeavor. During the proceedings, Whybrow acknowledged Dr. Paul Satz, emeritus professor in the Semel Institute, for his pioneering efforts to develop The Help Group – UCLA Neuropsychology Program, which was established ten years ago, and Dr. Robert Bilder, professor & chief of medical psychology in the Semel Institute for his support of the ongoing collaboration between the two entities.

Whybrow gave a special tribute to Firestone, presenting her with an honorary crystal Bruin Bear in recognition of her vision, leadership and dedication to the development of the alliance. In her acceptance, Firestone thanked Whybrow, McCracken and UCLA colleagues for their commitment to the partnership. "Applied research is essential in furthering the development of evidence-based best practices for the effective education of children with autism spectrum disorders," Firestone noted. "Together, we look forward to opening new doors of opportunity to many more children and families living with autism."

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