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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SAN DIEGO FUTURES FOUNDATION RECEIVES A
\$300,000 GRANT FROM THE GARY AND MARY WEST FOUNDATION
FOR YOUTH IT TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

SAN DIEGO, CA – JUNE 24, 2011: The San Diego Futures Foundation (SDFF) received a \$300,000 grant from the Gary and Mary West Foundation to offer job development services to low-income youth ages 18 – 24. The services will help non-college-bound youth obtain the skills they need to gain careers in the IT field. Services offered include training, testing, certification, soft skills development, work readiness workshops, work experience, and employment development and search assistance. The program prepares youth for entry-level jobs such as computer and network technicians that lead to more advanced positions and careers in the IT field.

Since 2008, SDFF has provided basic computer training to nearly 4,000 families as part of its San Diego Broadband Initiative (SDBI). In 2010, SDFF began offering career development services through its partnership with Able Disabled Advocacy. Since then, SDFF has trained 50 adults, with more than 75% having been certified and placed into jobs. Funding from the Gary and Mary West Foundation will enable SDFF to tailor and offer the services to 48 youth.

The President of SDFF's Board of Directors, Ken Harth, said "this is a great opportunity for SDFF to adapt its successful adult-training model to the needs of non-college bound youth in communities like City Heights. We couldn't be more pleased to have the opportunity or more proud of our staff for their success."

SDFF's Executive Director, Jeff Hancock, said "much of our success comes from the emphasis we put on soft skills and communications, and the expectations we set with our students. It's important that they are prepared for and understand the culture of the workplace and environments in which they're likely to work. Credentials and skills are obviously very important but they are just part of the total job development puzzle."

According to a 2011 study by Harvard University titled *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*, nearly two-thirds of the jobs created in the United States over the next decade will require a post-secondary occupational credential. The report suggests the need for a more broad range of high-quality pathways offered to young adults. In an a review of the articles on harvard.edu, Robert Schwartz, academic dean and professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education said "we are the only developed nation that depends so exclusively on its higher education system as the sole institutional vehicle to help young people transition from secondary school to careers, and from adolescence to adulthood."

ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO FUTURES FOUNDATION

The San Diego Futures Foundation (SDFF) is a social enterprise created to improve access to information technology resources, increase computer literacy, and provide training to enable a broader range of citizens to cross the digital divide. SDFF fulfills its mission by addressing three primary areas of need in the San Diego community: access to technology and education, youth training, and technical services for nonprofit organizations. During the past eleven years, SDFF has provided more than 27,000 computers and 30,000 hours of technical support to more than 1,000 San Diego nonprofits and community-based organizations, and 4,000 individuals and families. For more information please visit www.sdfutures.org.

ABOUT THE GARY AND MARY WEST FOUNDATION

The Gary and Mary West Foundation is a private, non-operating foundation that funds tax-exempt organizations in San Diego, California and Omaha, Nebraska. The Foundation focuses on strategies that prepare youth to enter the workforce, attain living wage careers and achieve economic self-sufficiency. The Gary and Mary West Foundation supports highly focused educational programs that prepare young adults with the skills needed to be successful in the career pathway of their choice. For more information please visit www.garyandmarywestfoundation.org.

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