



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 7, 2016

**Media contact: Alicia Hays,
210.335.2340
hidalgofoundation@bexar.org**

**Hidalgo Foundation announces \$1 million plus grant to assist
Early Intervention Program for families**

Announcement made during 15th anniversary celebration

The John L. Santikos Charitable Foundation, a fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation, will support Bexar County's Early Intervention Program with a generous gift made through the Hidalgo Foundation. The gift of \$1,070,000 over three years will provide funding for the program which focuses on families with children, zero to three years old, who have become involved in the child welfare system.

"Since its inception, the Hidalgo Foundation has sought to support the needs of children and families in Bexar County through the reconstruction and restructuring of our Children's Courts," said Hidalgo Foundation President Tracy Wolff, while making the announcement during the Foundation's 15th anniversary celebration Thursday. "Judge Peter Sakai has created a model for the nation to follow when it comes to helping parents access the resources they need to raise mentally and physically healthy families."

Bexar County has approximately 1,000 children under the age of 3 each year who are confirmed victims of child abuse or neglect. Statewide there were 26,342 children in the same age group. Abuse and neglect at this age compromises the attachment between child and parent, which has long lasting and cyclical effects.

"Mr. Santikos' charitable interests were vast, but he certainly had a special place in his heart for the underserved and the most vulnerable in our community. The Early Intervention Program is focused on the most vulnerable of our children — infants and toddlers who have been victims of abuse or neglect. We are proud to support an innovative, comprehensive program that is creating collaboration and coordination of services across sectors in order to better serve the children of Bexar County," said Dennis E. Noll, President/CEO of the San Antonio Area Foundation.

- more -

Research shows that children with unhealthy attachments are at a much greater risk for delinquency, substance abuse and depression later in life. Infants and toddlers who do not develop secure attachments also produce elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which causes long-term harm to the brain.

The mission of the Early Intervention Program is to reverse the negative effects by reunifying infants and toddlers with responsible parents who are better equipped to form a healthy attachment with their children. This is accomplished by providing an intensive and comprehensive network of services in mental health and child development; empowering parents with skills and education in child development; setting up a safety system of early reunification for children and parents; and focusing on the attachment and bonding issues for children.

The Early Intervention Program is modeled after the successful Bexar County Family Drug Court, through which participants receive counseling, treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, and assistance with housing, employment and education. The program team has experience in treatment, social services, child abuse and neglect, advocacy and the law.

“The John L. Santikos Charitable Foundation is an incredible gift to the children of Bexar County,” Tracy Wolff said. “We are honored the trustees of the Foundation considered this groundbreaking program worthwhile for the future of our community.”

###

The Hidalgo Foundation of Bexar County is a 501c3 nonprofit founded in 2001 exclusively for the charitable, literary, historical and educational purpose for the sole benefit of Bexar County, Texas. Find us online at www.bexar.org/hidalgo or facebook.com/HidalgoFoundationBexarCounty.

The San Antonio Area Foundation is the community foundation serving the San Antonio Area for more than 50 years. The Area Foundation helps donors achieve their charitable goals and serves as a collaborative leader, investing in the future of our community by bringing people together to address key community issues. The Area Foundation manages more than 500 charitable funds and \$921 million in assets. Since 1964, \$305 million for scholarships and grants have been awarded to nonprofits that educate youth, preserve the environment, protect animals, fund research and provide a variety of services that enhance the quality of life in our region. Learn more about your community foundation at saafdn.org.