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DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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January 3, 2008

Steven Angel, President
Drumming for Your Life

Dear Steven:

I am writing this letter in strong support of Drumming for Your Life's proposal for a NAMM Program Grant to bring the Life Skills program into the Los Angeles County Probation Detention Camps. Your work in the Probation Juvenile Halls over the past four years has served to help so many youth entangled in the juvenile justice system.

Specifically, the Life Skills program has helped many youth tap into the unique values in their character and to feel good about themselves at a potentially very low point in their lives. The Life Skills program allows defended youth to work through and process issues which have brought them into contact with the justice system. Many of these youth have never had the opportunity to be exposed to anything like the Life Skills program. While the results of involvement in the program are not always easy to quantify, there is no doubt about the effectiveness of the program when you see the unmistakable beam of pride on the face of a youth who has been fortunate enough to participate in the Life Skills program.

Department of Mental Health ("DMH") has continued to fund the Life Skills program during difficult budget times and believes that offering the opportunity to Camp Probation youth will potentiate the clear benefits of the program. In addition, offering the program in a longer-term setting like the Probation Camps will allow more youth to benefit from the full Life Skills program. DMH will continue to support and facilitate the collection and analysis of outcome data to empirically support the value of the Life Skills program.

I have seen the Life Skills program work in a variety of juvenile justice settings, with a variety of populations. The Life Skills program has been used on the Unfit Unit where youth are being tried as adults, as well as in acute treatment settings with seriously mentally-ill youth. As a result of seeing the portability of the program, I am convinced that it will be highly effective in the Probation camp system. As a result, I strongly support the NAMM proposal that you have submitted.

Very truly yours,

Karen Streich, Ph.D.
Mental Health Clinical District Chief
Los Angeles County – Department of Mental Health
Juvenile Justice Mental Health Programs

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"