

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- Wednesday, April 15, 2009

12 noon Silent Vigil at Border Patrol Headquarters

2411 Boswell Rd, Chula Vista, CA 91914

Friends of Friendship Park – www.friendshippark.org

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While President Obama sits down today for a friendly visit with his Mexican counterpart, President Felipe Calderon, local community organizations are continuing to press for public access to Friendship Park, the local park on the U.S.-Mexico border where, until recently, San Diegans and *Tijuanenses* have been able to make friends through the border fence. Earlier this year, Mike Fisher, Chief of the San Diego Sector Border Patrol, made the decision to eliminate all public access to this historic site.

In a continuing action to reopen Friendship Park, supporters of the coalition will gather at 12 noon today in front of the San Diego Border Patrol Headquarters, located at 2411 Boswell Rd, Chula Vista, CA 91914.

The vigil coincides with President Barack Obama's visit to Mexico, where he and President Calderon will be exploring what U.S. officials have called "a deep and comprehensive relationship." Members of the coalition say they are wanting President Obama to put into practice this kind of rhetoric.

"Friendship is not just for Presidents," said Dan Watman, convener of the group, Border Encuentro, a member organization of the Friends of Friendship Park coalition.

The member organizations of the Friends of Friendship Park have been gathering for events at Friendship Park since 1994 - for an annual Christmastime celebration, *La Posada Sin Fronteras*, and for gatherings ranging from religious services to salsa dancing lessons. Families from the two nations have been meeting at this location since well before Friendship Park was inaugurated by then-First Lady Pat Nixon in 1971.

As part of today's vigil, members of the local coalition will place candies and crosses at Border Patrol headquarters, in protest of assertions that contraband could

be passed through the border fence at Friendship Park. Border Patrol officials have not presented a single documented case of contraband having been confiscated at the location.

"President Obama can demonstrate real change by reopening Friendship Park soon," said Nicole Ramos, a USD student who is a member of Border Angels, one of the organizations belonging to the coalition. "We are counting on officials within the Obama Administration to make a statement about transparency and public review by overturning a decision that cannot be substantiated with facts," continued Ramos.

For more information about the Friends of Friendship Park, visit:
www.friendshipark.org

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