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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Face Castings Enable Visually Impaired Visitors to Experience Remember Them: Champions for Humanity Monument; Congresswoman Barbara Lee Pledges Her Support of Remember Them Project**

**Oakland, CA** - Lightly touching the forehead on the clay sculpture of Abraham Lincoln, Jerry Newell who has been blind since childhood, remarked that he had no idea that the 16<sup>th</sup> US president had such a furrowed brow and cowlicks. Offering this tactile experience to other visually impaired individuals, individual bronze face castings placed on low granite walls will be a unique addition to the Remember Them: Champions for Humanity monument, which features twenty-five larger than life humanitarians on the grand sculpture created by Mario



Chiodo and his staff. The faces of these internationally recognized leaders, along with their names and inspiring quotes in large-print type and Braille, will be a featured element adjacent to the monument, which is to be installed in downtown Oakland in Spring 2008. In the face of adversity, all of the monument's honorees made significant humanitarian contributions through their courage, compassion and commitment. It is Chiodo's hope that the inclusion of humanitarians Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Helen Keller will inspire the public to realize that leadership is not limited by physical disability. Mr. Newell commented, "touching the face and hands of Helen Keller was very moving for me". Mario Chiodo, who invited Jerry Newell and Anna Ortiz from the

Lion's Blind Center to experience the sculpture in progress, responded emotionally while observing Newell's response to this novel tactile encounter, saying "the face castings are a particularly special part of the project for me -- I am very touched by his excitement". After Mr. Newell's visit, Mr. Chiodo is certain that this special feature will give the visually impaired the unique opportunity to encounter the faces of prominent individuals whose features are so familiar to the sighted.

The Chiodo Art Development team was honored by a visit from Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who visited the studio in October to view the Remember Them monument in progress. Initially speechless when she saw the monument, Congresswoman Lee commented that "Remember Them will offer positive role models and powerful alternatives to the negative stereotypes depicted in media outlets" and immediately asked Mr. Chiodo what she could do to support this inspirational project. Delighted with its Spring 2008 placement in Oakland, Lee feels that the monument will showcase Oakland's artistic and humanitarian values, and will provide a path to revitalize, stabilize and build a more cohesive city. Mr. Chiodo observed he feels blessed that an individual of national and international prominence understands and supports this project. Mr. Chiodo has also recently received visits from Maya Angelou, Martin Luther King III, Mayor-Elect Ron Dellums, Assemblyman Sandre Swanson and Attorney General-Elect Jerry Brown.

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