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**ALS PATIENT FUNDS NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR CHILDREN
WHOSE PARENTS SUFFER FROM THE DISEASE**

CAMARILLO, Calif. (Sept. 26, 2011) – A Conejo Valley man living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, has established at the Ventura County Community Foundation a national scholarship to help the children of parents suffering from the disease pay for their college education.

The Merfeld Family Foundation Scholarship Fund was established earlier this year by Greg Merfeld, who was diagnosed with ALS in 2010 at age 49. Merfeld has lost more than 20 relatives to the disease that runs in his family.

“I know the potential emotional and financial devastation if families are not fortunate enough to have resources like health, long-term care or life insurance and disability plans already in place. They go into heavy debt mode quick,” said Merfeld, a husband and father of two teen-age children.

ALS, better known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a neurological disorder that affects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord, causing paralysis. Those with ALS eventually die from complications within two to five years. There is no cure.

The endowment fund is expected to award a minimum of four scholarships of \$2,500 each for the fall of 2012. The awards will continue yearly until the cure is discovered. At that time, the conditions of the scholarship will change to support students whose parents suffer from another fatal neurological disease.

Few scholarships are offered to students whose parents are affected by ALS, and almost all of those limit the award to students living in a specific geographic area. While preference for the Merfeld scholarship will be given to Southern California residents as well as those from Iowa – Merfeld’s native state – anyone across the nation will be considered.

Thanks to Merfeld’s friends and colleagues, many of them Ventura County residents, he has raised over \$250,000 for the fund.

“When I was diagnosed with this disease, many people reached out to me and asked what they could do. A few months later it hit me: Start a scholarship fund. I am amazed by the generosity of so many that have contributed to helping these children in their time of great need. My goal is now to get this to \$500,000 before I call it a day,” said Merfeld, a market-research executive.

VCCF will begin taking applications for this scholarship in December. Students can learn more about this and other scholarship funds by visiting the foundation’s website at www.vccf.org, click on apply/donate to a scholarship. Those interested in donating to the Merfeld Family Foundation Fund can do so on the same webpage.

For more information, contact program officer Virginia Weber at (805) 988-0196, Ext. 119, or by email at vweber@vccf.org.

VCCF is the largest provider of scholarships to Ventura County students, having awarded over \$7 million in student aid since its founding in 1987. Last year, the community foundation granted more than \$820,000 in scholarships to 265 Ventura County students.

ABOUT VCCF

VCCF invests the charitable capital that drives the philanthropic engines of Ventura County. Its portfolio performance ranks in the top 11 of all community foundations in the United States for long-term growth. With total assets of \$110 million, its mission is to promote and enable philanthropy to improve our community for good for ever, which it does through grantmaking, scholarships and training at its Center for Nonprofit Leadership. Visit vccf.org or call (805) 988-0196.



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