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**VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TO PRESENT  
SECOND ANNUAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS**  
*VCCF adds two honors that spotlight exemplary leadership in our region*

**CAMARILLO, Calif.** (May 26, 2011) – The Ventura County Community Foundation will honor the service of five individuals and a local foundation at the Community Leadership Awards luncheon at the Museum of Ventura County on June 14.

In their second year, the awards recognize individuals and institutions which show by example how philanthropic leadership can create substantive change in Ventura County, particularly in times of challenge.

VCCF has expanded the award categories this year. The Next Generation Award honors young people whose volunteer efforts serve as an example to their peers and demonstrate that philanthropy can start at any age. The new Kesa Ryono Award will be given to unsung heroes who dedicate countless hours to serving the community by providing ways for neighbors to connect to solve local issues.

“The Community Leadership Awards go to those individuals who exemplify the meaning of leadership within community. These are the volunteers who go the extra mile for the place and people they care about,” said VCCF President and CEO Hugh J. Ralston.

“The addition of the Kesa Ryono and Next Generation awards is proof,” Ralston noted, “nonprofit and community work in Ventura County are as strong today as at any time in our history, especially when our youth are encouraging others to give of themselves.”

Mike and Loretta Merewether of Ventura will share the 2011 Philanthropists Award. Long-time leaders in the community, with service on a number of boards and visible supporters of issues such as affordable housing and the arts, they have formulated creative solutions for the local nonprofit community.

The Merewethers used proceeds from the sale of property they owned in downtown Ventura to set up a charitable fund at VCCF. With those funds, they became major contributors toward a new 24-

unit farm worker housing project in Santa Paula. In addition, they were benefactors of the Working Artists Ventura project that provides affordable living and working spaces for artists.

“The main message we hope to convey by being recognized for this award,” said Mike Merewether, “is that we hope to inspire others to use the VCCF resources or other similar vehicles as a partner to manage donations so they might enjoy seeing the fruits of their work in their own lifetime.”

The Outstanding Organization Award for 2011 goes to the Smith-Hobson Foundation for the philanthropic leadership the foundation and members of the prominent Smith and Hobson families have demonstrated for two decades. The Foundation established one of the earliest funds at VCCF and has awarded over \$1.6 million to local nonprofits over the last 20 years. Its grantmaking has focused on arts and educational organizations, with ongoing support for many key arts companies in the region.

Past VCCF scholarship winner Dallas Woodburn of Ventura will receive the Next Generation Leader Award, honoring her efforts to engage students in their community as well as her offer to establish a scholarship fund to give back to VCCF. Woodburn is a student at Purdue University, working toward her master’s degree in fiction writing. In 2001, the now-24-year-old Woodburn founded Write On! For Literacy, a nonprofit that encourages reading and writing in young children. In the 10 years since its inception, Write On! has donated more than 11,000 books to local schools.

The Kesa Ryono Award commemorates a former Community Foundation colleague who went above and beyond when it came to giving to people of all walks of life in her community. Ryono, who died in 2010, ran for public office, served on the Port Hueneme Parks and Recreation Board and the Ventura County Fish and Game Commission and was instrumental in the closing of the Halaco smelting plant in Oxnard after seeing the environmental and health hazards it caused. In 2002, the Sierra Club’s Los Padres Chapter named Ryono Activist of the Year.

Janet Bridgers was nominated by the public to receive this award for her campaign to preserve the environment, as well as building alliances between local communities. The Oxnard resident founded Earth First, a media-oriented nonprofit concerned with the natural environment. Also a filmmaker, Bridges has made three documentaries on the Santa Barbara Channel. Bridgers has been active in Ventura County since she moved to Oxnard from Los Angeles in 2000. A native of New Mexico, she moved to California in 1977.

Former VCCF Board Member Joseph Brown will be honored by the current board with the 2011 Founders Award, which was established to honor a long-time leader from the Community Foundation itself. A founding member of the VCCF board and later its chairman, Brown has been instrumental in the advancement of VCCF as well as other nonprofits throughout the county. He served as a chairman of the Conejo Future Foundation and as a regent for California Lutheran University, as well as leadership positions in a wide array of local and regional organizations. At the Community Foundation, Brown was

the chairman for the Strategic Planning Committee and the Cornerstone Project to increase philanthropy and created one of VCCF's first endowment funds.

Serving as event sponsor is Verizon. Santa Barbara Bank & Trust is the award sponsor and Zestnet Inc. is the foundation sponsor.

The Community Leadership event, which is open to the public, will be at noon June 14 at the Museum of Ventura County, 100 E. Main St., Ventura. Individual tickets are \$50 and a table of eight is \$400. All proceeds go to the Mary Schwabauer Leadership Fund, created in honor of VCCF's fourth board chair to support current VCCF operations.

To RSVP, contact Lindsay Smith at (805) 988-0196, Ext.115 or by email at [lsmith@vccf.org](mailto:lsmith@vccf.org). Or you can register online at <http://www.vccf.org/eventinfo.shtml>.

VCCF is a family of charitable funds with combined assets of \$108 million. Its mission is to promote and enable philanthropy to improve our community for good for ever, which it does through grantmaking, scholarships and leadership training programs through the Center for Nonprofit Leadership. VCCF has been certified in compliance with national standards by the Council on Foundations, the highest form of peer review in the United States. For more information, visit [vccf.org](http://vccf.org) or contact VCCF at (805) 988-0196.

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