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NEW COMMUNITY AWARD HONORS GRASS-ROOTS LEADERSHIP

VCCF seeks nominations for Kesa Ryono Unsung Hero annual prize

CAMARILLO, Calif. (Dec. 13, 2010) – The Ventura County Community Foundation has introduced the Kesa Ryono Unsung Hero Award to honor Ventura County residents who work diligently and without fanfare to better the quality of life in their communities.

Named for the Port Hueneme community activist who died in March at age 47, the award will be presented at VCCF's second annual Community Leadership Awards ceremony in March 2011, when VCCF recognizes individuals and organizations who have demonstrated exemplary leadership that serves the entire community

At the time of her death Ryono was employed at the community foundation as an associate for the Ventura County Civic Alliance, a VCCF initiative of civic leaders focused on developing strategies for sustainability of the region's environment, workforce and communities. Ryono enthusiastically supported the Alliance's investment in civic leadership and creating opportunities where leaders could work across boundaries to solve problems.

“At Kesa's memorial service, people from all walks of life shared stories of how she helped them when they were sick, unemployed, homesick or depressed,” said Hugh J. Ralston, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “It became clear from these many tributes she gave of herself in ways that uplifted everyone she met. All of us at VCCF, and at the Alliance, saw daily her commitment to this region, but we were profoundly moved to see the impact she had on the lives of people in her community, often by the simple power of her presence, her persistence and her passion for people.”

Ryono held the only antidote to anxiety is action. The mother of two daughters, she joined the campaign to shut down the toxic Halaco smelting plant adjacent to the Oxnard park and beach where her girls played. Believing knowledge is power, she created and distributed questionnaires asking parents about the health effects the plant had on their families, which supplied evidence in the case against

Halaco. Due in part to public pressure, the federal government has undertaken a massive cleanup of the site.

Ryono served on the Port Hueneme Parks and Recreation Commission and the Ventura County Fish and Game Commission. In 2002, she was named Activist of the year by the Sierra Club's Los Padres Chapter. She ran for a seat on the Port Hueneme City Council in 2008. Although she lost, she developed what she called the 5/50 Campaign, advocating everyone complete five hours of volunteer work per month and give \$50 to charity each year. A copy of her call to action is posted on the VCCF website at www.vccf/kesaryonoawards.org.

The deadline for nominations is Jan. 31 and the final award winner will be chosen by the VCCF board, along with the 2011 Community Awards.

“VCCF is not only pleased to recognize Kesa’s contributions to our community,” Ralston said, “but we also want to highlight such ‘citizen leaders’ and the often unsung nature of their work as part of our annual efforts to celebrate community leadership in our region.”

Please E-mail nominating statements to jschmalzel@vccf.org or mail them to Kesa Ryono Award Nominations, c/o Ventura County Community Foundation, 1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 150, Camarillo, CA 93010.

VCCF is a family of charitable funds with combined assets of \$101 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. Visit vccf.org or contact VCCF at (805) 988-0196.

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