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FOUNDATIONS JOIN FORCES TO CREATE FUND FOR RETURNING VETS

CAMARILLO, Calif. (Nov. 11, 2010) – The Gold Coast Veterans Foundation and the Ventura County Community Foundation are challenging local businesses and individuals to donate to the new Ventura County Veterans Fund that aids returning servicemembers.

Gold Coast Veterans has committed \$15,000 and the Community Foundation has put up \$10,000 from its Community Response Fund as seed money, believing the grateful citizens of Ventura County will help the fund reach its \$75,000 goal by March 31, 2011.

“Veterans have provided extraordinary service to this nation. Currently less than 1 percent of Americans serve on active duty so the other 99 percent need to serve those returning veterans who are protecting our freedom and liberty,” said Ron Greenwood, founder and chair of GCVC and a combat-disabled Vietnam vet. “This is the time for all us to help them integrate back into normal life.”

An estimated 30,000 veterans will return to Ventura County over the next several years. Many are coming back after multiple tours in combat zones, and by some estimates 30 percent likely will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The veterans and their families also face financial and relationship challenges brought on by the long deployments.

Veterans Administration benefits only go so far to help returning veterans transition back into civilian life and begin building their futures, Greenwood said. “This is why the community must step forward to fill in the gaps in areas like employment, counseling, education, housing, to name just a few,” he said

Money contributed to the Ventura County Veterans Fund will be distributed to local organizations dedicated to serving veterans and their families reintegrate back into their communities. An advisory committee, including members of the GCVF board, will review proposals and make recommendations for final distribution of all donations.

“Many of us who served in Vietnam had a rough time returning to our homes,” said Gary Erickson, a member of both the VCCF and GCVF boards. “Times are different now, and we want to make sure these honored veterans get the help they need as they come home.”

Donations can be made by check to Ventura County Veterans Fund, c/o Ventura County Community Foundation, 1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 150, Camarillo, CA 93010. Or contribute online at vccf.org. Just look under News on the left side of the home page for donation information.

The Gold Coast Veterans Foundation was established this year to assist veterans and their families through a comprehensive, integrated network of services. The foundation focuses not only on raising awareness of the importance of helping veterans but providing resources to make sure veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled, and to work with local leaders to ensure veterans reintegrate into the local workforce. Additional information can be found by contacting the Foundation at (805) 477-9888.

The Ventura County Community Foundation, based in Camarillo, serves donors and the communities throughout Ventura County. It has been certified in compliance with national standards by the Council on Foundations. In addition to managing a portfolio of long-term endowments, VCCF stewards donor legacies, teaches nonprofit leadership and invests in the future. With total assets of \$100 million, the foundation distributes some \$5 million per year to local nonprofits in grants from donor-advised, donor-designated and unrestricted funds, agency endowments, field-of-interest funds and scholarships. For more information, visit vccf.org or contact VCCF at (805) 988-0196.

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