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Contact:
Ross Goldberg
818-597-8453

**Ventura County Community Foundation Awards Unprecedented
\$8.5 Million in Fiscal Year 2006, Completing an Extraordinary Year**

(CAMARILLO, CA – November 20, 2006) — In one of its most productive years to date, the Ventura County Community Foundation awarded an unprecedented \$8.5 million in grants and pledges in fiscal year 2006, ending September 30, 2006. The Foundation also received one of its largest bequests, established over three dozen new funds, launched several new programs and was certified in compliance with national standards.

“This year’s historic number of grants and pledges and national certification are among the myriad ways we have made a difference in Ventura County this past year, to help our neighbors and colleagues build community through philanthropy” said VCCF President & CEO Hugh Ralston. “Our achievements reflect fidelity to our mission of building capital to sustain long-term philanthropy throughout the county.”

Fiscal year’s 2006’s \$8.5 million in grants more than doubles last year’s total. It includes \$931,450 in annual scholarships for some 330 outstanding Ventura County students and two pledges equaling \$4.0 million from the Martha K. and Martin V. Smith Foundation; \$2.2 million from donor-advised funds; and \$658,625 from designated and agency endowment funds to support operating expenses of local nonprofits.

The Foundation’s 37 new funds established by donors, totaling \$15 million in designated and agency endowments, scholarship and memorial funds, brings VCCF’s total donor funds to 449 and combined assets to \$91 million. Among the new funds are five endowments established with one of the largest bequests ever received by VCCF, \$11 million from Russell Fischer, a 73-year resident of Ventura County.

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VCCF's certification of national standards was awarded by the Council of Foundations in compliance with organizational and financial practices established as National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations. VCCF was one of 23 California community foundations to be certified.

"This important milestone, which concluded a rigorous process of evaluation by our peers, signifies leadership in the Foundation's adherence to policies and practices appropriate for a community foundation," Ralston said.

Other ways VCCF expanded its capacity in FY 2006 to build philanthropy in Ventura County include:

- The awarding of a \$231,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop community strategies to support nursing. One of ten grants awarded to foundations nationally and the only one given in California, it will support a two-year partnership with CSU Channel Islands to engage many stakeholders critical to developing a realistic strategy for this county.
- The release of "Culture, Collaboration, and Capacity: A Call to a Healthier Community," a major study prepared by *Destino: The Hispanic Legacy Fund*, calling for enhanced collaboration and community partnerships to meet the healthcare needs of Latinos in Ventura County. This set the stage for tailored capacity building training programs, provided by the Resource Center for Nonprofit Management, which, along with the study, was funded through a partnership between *Destino* and The Focus Funds, a pioneering partnership with The California Endowment.
- The opening of the Resource Center's new Technology Center to help board and staff of nonprofit organizations throughout Ventura County learn to use computer technology for more efficient and effective operations.
- Creation of the Century Circle, a group of 100 leaders from throughout the county who will partner with VCCF to strengthen its ability to promote and enable philanthropy. This vitally important endeavor will provide annual resources for VCCF as well as invest in its future capacity for grantmaking and operations through its Cornerstone endowments.
- Launching of the Board Leadership Initiative at the Resource Center to expand VCCF programs providing leadership support to board members of Ventura County nonprofits.
- Another successful year of solid long-term investment returns, within risk standards, to provide long-term results outperforming designated benchmarks and providing capital growth after distribution, fees and inflation. VCCF's ten-year record is 9.3 percent, vs. a custom index of 7.9 percent.

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- Awarding of the first Destino reading literacy awards totaling \$21,000 to families in South Oxnard and Port Hueneme and \$100,000 in Destino health-related grants.
- Awarding of \$100,000 in grants from the *Women's Legacy Fund* to sustain programs for girls and women.
- Launch of a donor-driven Social Justice Giving Circle, with donors providing \$50,000 in grants to organizations addressing systemic social inequities.
- Expansion of VCCF's nonprofit/civic dialogs with city-specific discussions about partnerships between nonprofits and municipalities.
- Approval of the Compass Blueprint Demonstration project in Ventura County, a proposal submitted by the Ventura County Civic Alliance in partnership with Ventura Council of Governments to the Southern California Association of Governments.
- Disaster training for nonprofits with vulnerable populations.
- Establishment of the *Mental Health Initiative* to enhance paraprofessional training for adults and teens, with \$50,000 in grants distributed.
- Continued distribution from the *Special and Urgent Needs (SUN) Fund* to provide assistance to local nonprofits dealing with emergency needs.

The Ventura County Community Foundation is a family of charitable funds whose combined assets now exceed \$90 million. Founded in 1987, the Foundation's mission is to promote and enable philanthropy and to build long-term capital to benefit Ventura County. For more information, as well as a summary of the standards checklist, visit www.vccf.org.

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