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# News

For Immediate Release

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## **Ventura County Community Foundation Announces Record-Setting Grants in 2005**

(CAMARILLO, CA – March 9, 2006) — The Ventura County Community Foundation announced today that in the fiscal year just concluded it made more than \$4 million in grants and pledges to nonprofit organizations and local students seeking scholarship support. This is the highest total in the Foundation’s 18-year history.

A significant part of VCCF grants came from donor-advised funds totaling more than \$785,000, where donors made recommendations to support local nonprofit organizations. Nearly \$600,000 in additional dollars came from funds established by nonprofit agencies and donors who dedicated the funds to the work of these nonprofits, the vast bulk of which are endowments. These grants provide critical operating support, sustaining operations on an annual basis.

“The mission of the Foundation is to enable and promote philanthropy in ways that improve our community,” said VCCF President Hugh Ralston. “Thanks to the generous commitment of our donors and other friends with whom we partner, the Foundation is in a unique position to help support many worthwhile organizations throughout the county so each can continue to make an important difference in the lives of those they serve.”

Among the largest grants awarded in 2005 were two from the Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Foundation, a support organization of VCCF founded by the late Ventura County developer and builder. The first was a \$1 million grant to the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation to build a new Seabee Museum in Port Hueneme. The second was a \$500,000 grant to the Ventura County Museum of History and Art’s capital and endowment campaigns, establishing the Martin V. Smith Pavilion.

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In 2005 VCCF also presented over \$600,000 in scholarship awards to deserving students. This dollar amount represents a doubling from just a year ago and reflects both new memorial funds and new grants for specific programs. It also reflects an expansion of the Basile Scholarship Fund that permits renewable \$5,000 annual awards – for up to four years – and the second round of the Orfaea Nursing Scholarships.

The Community Foundation's support for students also expanded with the establishment of an endowed Vocational Scholarship Fund, providing awards to students on a non-college track, and the establishment of the Medical Education Fund, seeded with Tobacco Settlement funds, that will provide forgivable loans for students who intend to become nurses practicing in Ventura County.

The past year saw Destino: The Hispanic Legacy Fund award its largest grant total ever – \$102,000 – to various community groups whose work focused on family strengthening and financial literacy among Latinos, with a particular focus on health literacy issues. This grant also includes additional funds provided by The California Endowment as part of its Focus Funders program, working with a group of eight California-based community groups to improve access to healthcare for underrepresented populations.

In addition, the Women's Legacy Fund awarded \$85,000 in grants to ten organizations that focus on training, education and economic opportunities for women and girls in Ventura County.

The year just concluded also saw significant contributions through VCCF for disaster relief. Support was given to La Conchita residents following the devastating storms in January 2005, victims of the Asian Tsunami, and residents along the Gulf Coast following Katrina's horrific impacts.

VCCF unrestricted grants focused on supporting organizations in transition, where operating support resulted in stabilizing new levels of service. Made primarily through its Community Response Fund, organizations receiving support included: the United Way of Ventura County (as facilitator for the Children's Health Initiative), the 211 project, the Ventura County Civic Alliance (for its projects on growth and sustainability and workforce preparedness), the Ventura County Arts Council (for operating support as it builds capacity for

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sustainable funding), and a series of city-based programs that are providing senior nutritional programs previously provided by the county. And VCCF's SUN Fund (for Special and Urgent Needs) distributed more than \$50,000 to Ventura County organizations who submitted proposals for addressing special and urgent needs, often relating to unexpected expenses or program needs.

According to Ralston, the Foundation's work in 2006 will continue to focus on its five core areas: engagement, education, endowment, grants and scholarships. "It starts almost as a virtual circle with engagement and education leading to the many endowments established at VCCF," he said. "That connects directly to the many grants which strengthen nonprofits and to scholarships to seed the next generation. It is good work, and we are privileged to partner with so many to make such a difference here in Ventura County."

Created in 1987, the Ventura County Community Foundation is a family of charitable funds whose combined assets now exceed \$85 million. The Foundation's mission is to promote and enable philanthropy and to build long-term capital to benefit Ventura County. For more information, visit [www.vccf.org](http://www.vccf.org).

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