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**FREEZE ADVISORY COMMITTEE HONORED
FOR IMPORTANT FUNDRAISING EFFORT DURING FREEZE**

Camarillo, CALIF. - (October 9 , 2007) – The Ventura County Freeze Advisory Committee, whose Community Disaster Fund-Freeze Fund was established jointly by the United Way of Ventura County and the Ventura County Community Fund (VCCF) following the devastating freeze last winter, has received the California Emergency Services Association’s (CESA) Gold Award for the Private Sector.

The award was presented for the Committee’s efforts to harness contributions from local, regional and statewide funders in response to the needs of those in Ventura County displaced by the January 2007 freeze. Todd Goehner of Lutheran Social Services, who managed aid distribution services for his agency at the Santa Clara Valley Job and Career Center in Santa Paula, accepted the award, which was presented for “outstanding service in the emergency management field.” Presentation was made during CESA’s annual conference in Kelseyville.

Laura Hernandez, with the Ventura County Sheriff’s Department Office of Emergency Services, nominated the Committee based upon the extraordinary and innovative measures the Fund undertook to “secure private donations and quickly direct these funds to help the unemployed workers not covered by governmental assistance.” Hernandez presented the award to the entire committee during its regular meeting on Sept. 26.

As a result of devastation resulting from the cold temperatures, some \$280 million in damage and large-scale unemployment among farm workers resulted. United Way of Ventura County and VCCF moved quickly, combining initial seed money totaling \$40,000 to establish an emergency "Freeze Fund" to help farm workers meet basic needs. In early February 2007, United Way of Ventura County and the Community Foundation convened a group of nonprofit and government agencies as well as interested community members to assist with the relief process. This group, known as the Freeze Advisory Committee, determined a plan for aid distribution to the farm worker community.

Buoyed by contributions from individuals, businesses and California Foundations, the Fund quickly grew to approximately \$763,000. Four agencies experienced in rental and utility assistance—Catholic Charities, Community Action of Ventura County, Lutheran, and St. John's Health Outreach Ministries—paired with agencies who provided outreach to those affected by the freeze and served as sites for the distribution of rental, utility, and other basic need assistance as well as food provided by FOOD Share. Nearly \$700,000 has been distributed.

Thus far, the Ventura County Human Services Agency has received 1,631 individual inquiries for public benefit assistance, processed 521 applications for assistance, and made 7,847 other referrals for outside services.

"The Freeze Fund was an example of community impact at work," said David M. Smith, president and chief executive officer of United Way. "By partnership with the Ventura County Community Foundation and other organizations, United Way demonstrated the importance of community impact collaboration in making a difference in the lives of hundreds of local residents."

"We are pleased that this extraordinary community collaboration has been recognized at the state level, reflecting the hard work of the Freeze Advisory Committee over many months," noted VCCF President Hugh Ralston. "Both VCCF and the United Way are proud to have been able to work together to distribute funds from throughout the state, but it was the Advisory Committee working so well together and so quickly that made it so effective for so many people."

For additional information about the Freeze Fund, please contact VCCF at (805) 988-0196 or United Way of Ventura County at (805) 485-6288.

Ventura County Community Foundation

The Ventura County Community Foundation is a family of charitable funds whose combined assets now exceed \$100 million, with 2006 grants and pledges of \$8.5 million. The Foundation's mission is to promote and enable philanthropy to improve our community and to build long-term capital to benefit Ventura County. The Foundation has recently been confirmed in compliance with national standards by the Council on Foundations, a reflection of the highest peer review across the nation's 700 community foundations. For more information, visit www.vccf.org.

United Way of Ventura County

United Way of Ventura County was established in 1945. Over the years the organization has distributed more than \$250 million to local health and human service organizations. Today, United Way is focused on a community impact direction designed to provide lasting solutions to community issues and concerns. For more information, visit www.vcunitedway.org.

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