



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Phase of the "Freeze Fund" to Distribute \$41,000 in Grants to Local Nonprofits Helping Farmworkers

(CAMARILLO, CA – February 7, 2007) — The Ventura County Community Foundation announced today the first four grants have been distributed from the Freeze Fund through the Community Disaster Fund — a special fund established at VCCF by the Community Foundation and the United Way of Ventura County — to assist farmworkers who are struggling with the aftereffects of the recent crop freezes. Each organization contributed \$20,000 as seed money for the “Freeze Fund.”

Other contributions have already been made to the fund from local citizens and community leaders, and more is expected from local area businesses and individuals in the coming days as well as several statewide foundations who are working to address the significant needs in Monterrey, Tulare, Fresno and Ventura counties.

Initial grants totaling \$41,000 (VCCF, United Way, and a local grower) will go to:

- \$3,587.50 to St. John’s Health Ministries to provide rental and utility assistance to farmworkers in the La Colonia area who are impacted by the freeze.
- \$13,632.50 to Catholic Charities to provide rental and utility assistance to farmworkers in the El Rio, Port Hueneme and Moorpark areas who are impacted by the freeze. (Breakdown: \$7,175 El Rio; \$3,587.50 Port Hueneme; and \$2,870 Moorpark.)
- \$11,480 to Lutheran Social Services in partnership with Catholic Charities to provide rental and utility assistance to farmworkers in the Santa Clara Valley (Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, Rancho Sespe) area who are impacted by the freeze.
- \$12,300 to FOOD Share to purchase and distribute food and basic needs supplies (such as diapers, baby formula, etc.) to Ventura County farmworkers impacted by the freeze.

(More)

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“We are pleased to work with these nonprofits to get assistance quickly to those who need it the most,” said Hugh Ralston, VCCF president. “Thanks to an extraordinary level of cooperation and focus from the community nonprofits to work together to get aid quickly to those who are in need, we were able to get the first cycle of fund distributed within one week of the fund being established.”

Discussions among the nonprofit community and growers indicate that the immediate need may involve as much as 15,000 workers and their families. While the immediate need is pressing, long-term impacts of the freeze will also affect local farmers, packing houses, distribution centers as well as those working directly in the area farming businesses. As other contributions are received, grants will be distributed by VCCF to area nonprofits that are providing assistance to farmworkers whose lives have been severely disrupted by the recent freeze.

For those seeking assistance, please contact 2-1-1. For those wishing to make a contribution, please make the check payable to: **VCCF/Freeze Fund**. Contributions are being accepted at the Ventura County Community Foundation, 1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 150, Camarillo, CA 93010 and at the United Way of Ventura County, 1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 100, Camarillo, CA 93010. Please visit www.vccf.org and www.vcunitedway.org for more information.