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**VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S  
MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE ANNOUNCES 2007 GRANTEES  
\$50,000 AWARDED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL PROGRAMS**

**Camarillo, CALIF. - (October 8, 2007)** – The Ventura County Community Foundation has announced the recipients of four grants totaling \$50,000 from the 2007 VCCF Mental Health Initiative (MHI). The grants were awarded to programs in the County that focus on Para-professional Training, Education & Outreach, and Partnership Building in the mental health field.

VCCF established the Mental Health Initiative in 2006 to increase awareness related to mental health issues, leverage unrestricted grant funds to generate a positive impact in the area of mental health through private philanthropy, strengthen nonprofit organizations serving individuals with mental health disabilities, encourage partnerships and establish a vehicle for planned giving options for families with mental illness. These grants represent the second consecutive year that the Community Response Fund, VCCF's unrestricted grantmaking which focuses on key community priorities, has funded programs in the arena of mental health. Of particular note in the grants approved this year are the development of training programs for those who deal with those who have mental health problems and the development of a curriculum to enhance training.

The following programs received grants for 2007:

- **The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Ventura County** - \$7,920 to support the Court Education Program which provides education and training to prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and court staff about the ways that mental illness can be a factor across the spectrum of civil, criminal, family and juvenile law cases.

- **Turning Point Foundation** - \$15,000 to continue with the development of a Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist Certification Program at Ventura College to address the need for an enhanced workforce in the mental health field.
- **United Parents for Families in Crisis** - \$17,080 to train individuals throughout local neighborhoods, faith based communities and nonprofit organizations by providing a series of workshops utilizing curriculums based on best practices infused with practical tools from real experiences of consumers, family members, and peers.
- **Westminster Free Clinic** - \$10,000 for support of the Conecte Program which focuses on prevention and community empowerment while promoting education and access to hard-to-reach low-income families regarding mental illness and violence prevention.

Funding for the MHI grants comes from the unrestricted Community Response Fund at the VCCF. VCCF received 9 proposals totaling \$173,477 in response to this year's RFP (request for proposal). The four finalists were selected by a grants committee consisting of VCCF board members and community volunteers.

“While there have been significant public dollars focusing on these programs, particularly with Prop 63 funds” noted VCCF President Hugh Ralston, “those who work with the mentally ill know there are significant needs unmet by the good work in the public sector. VCCF is pleased to highlight these programs with grants from our Community Response Fund, and to continue to work with donors who direct their philanthropic dollars towards helping those organizations who work hard every day to help combat the effects of this disease”

Donors interested in the Mental Health Initiative can contribute to the Community Response Fund or to other funds that assist treating the mentally ill by contacting (805) 988-0196. Donors may also establish their own funds at VCCF in support of this cause.

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](http://www.vccf.org).

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