



FINAL DRAFT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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3 LEADING VENTURA COUNTY ORGANIZATIONS SEED COMMUNITY WIDE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

\$30,000 in challenge grants kicks off a community wide effort to address growing demand for basic needs services of food, shelter and health

Camarillo, California (September 29, 2009)

Three leading Ventura County organizations, who are facilitating the new collaborative *Ventura County Together* to raise support for local agencies addressing the increase in basic needs, announced today a commitment of \$30,000 to seed a community wide effort to assist local nonprofits in meeting the growing demand for food, shelter and health.

“In times of trouble, communities have always come together to help their own,” noted Claudia Harrison, executive director of the First 5 Ventura County, Hugh Ralston, president & CEO of the Ventura County

the organizations who have brought to life this new collaborative. “We hope that by seeding the effort to expand funding support from the wider community that we can challenge our neighbors to join in this important work.”

Each of the three organizations has committed \$10,000 to the effort to raise funds to help local agencies respond to the growing needs for support among the County’s residents. The campaign is trying to raise support from the broader public to help address the crisis emerging in addressing basic needs in the region.

Ventura County Together is a collaborative of 28 nonprofit and public sector agencies across the county who are meeting on a regular basis to find ways to strengthen the delivery of basic services to county residents whose lives have been disrupted by changes in state & county government programs, the cutbacks in the local economy or challenges in their own lives. Many nonprofits are adjusting to decreased donations from local supporters, lower endowment payouts and reductions in public sector support and/or contracts.

The collaborative is seeking ways to help local agencies in four key areas:

- housing and shelter
- access to medical care through the free clinics
- food through local food banks
- access for help through the 2-1-1 emergency call centers.

For more information on the partners in this collaborative, go to www.vctogether.org. Donations may be made on line.

The collaborative’s efforts to broaden support among Ventura County communities was recently commended by the Board of Supervisors, which passed a resolution saluting this collaborative work, an effort that is being duplicated in many of the County’s ten cities this month.

Appeals for support include seeking small contributions from a large number of people. As Chuck Watson, executive director of the Community Commission for Ventura County (one of the four organizations leading the collaborative) noted at the Board Meeting, “\$1 per week, or \$5 on a regular basis, from neighbors will make a difference. This is about helping those in our neighborhoods, those in our churches and community groups who have been impacted by the economic downturn.”

The three leading Ventura County organizations noted that the combination of changes in the state budget, reversals in the financial markets and increased demand for service have put the local nonprofit agencies in a vise. “Increasing demand for services - in light of falling public support and many donors pulling back, creates a very difficult set of circumstances,” they noted. “Many are accessing these services for the first time, and it can be very difficult to navigate both the public sector and nonprofit services.”

While there have been increased efforts on the part of many County services, there are legal restrictions as to who can be helped by what program. Many of the nonprofits are more flexible, but their services are heavily impacted by the ability of their donors to support growth in program and outreach. “If we can find a way for each of our neighbors to support this with small contributions, we can make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering,” stated Claudia Harrison. “Please join us with a contribution – either on a regular basis online or with a check.”

Contributions to Ventura County Together should be directed to the United Way who is serving as fiscal agent for the collaborative. All contributions will be divided as follows: 30% to Food Share, 30% for the nonprofit free clinics, 30% for homeless and shelter programs and 10% to sustain the 211 network that helps those in need find services at local agencies.

Donations can be made online at www.vctogether.org or by sending a check to Ventura County Together, c/o United Way of Ventura County, 1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 100, Camarillo, CA 93010.