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Ag Workers Impacted By Fire Receive Housing Support

Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation Begins Distributing More than \$430,000 for Housing Recovery to Ag Workers & Their Families

Santa Rosa, Calif. (December 4, 2017) – More than 150 agricultural workers and their families from Sonoma County who were displaced by the fires in October will begin receiving a much needed helping hand today from a housing recovery fund recently established by the Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation and the Sonoma County Farm Bureau.

Beginning today, more than \$430,000 will be distributed to individuals and families who were totally displaced by the fire, incurred damage to their homes or lost wages during the historic disaster. The funds are being distributed in the form of Visa gift cards to purchase new household items, food and supplies and to help pay utilities. To support the need for temporary or new housing, funds will be paid by the Foundation directly to landlords for rent. The “Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation Wildfire Housing Support Fund” was announced on October 18 to support ag workers and their families and has raised more than \$550,000 since it was established. Once the immediate needs are met, any remaining funds will be used by the Foundation to address the long-term need for affordable housing for ag workers in Sonoma County.

“Our ag workers are the heart and soul of Sonoma County agriculture and wine community so we want to do all we can to lessen the impact the fires has caused them,” said Karissa Kruse, president of Sonoma County Winegrowers and the executive director of the Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation. She added, “This fund was specifically established to help any ag worker in Sonoma County and it is very gratifying to know that our neighbors who work in the dairy, fruit, vegetable and grape industries are benefitting from the generosity and compassion of people from throughout the country and around the world.”

Donations to the Foundation’s housing recovery fund include contributions from charitable foundations, businesses including wineries in San Diego County that were ravaged by wildfires a few years ago; restaurants, wine bars and wine clubs; the local community and the general public. Contributions have ranged from \$50,000 to numerous individual donations of \$100, \$50 and \$25. One hundred percent of every donation made to the Fund goes directly to support ag workers and their families in Sonoma County.

“It is our hope that these funds will eliminate a lot of anxiety and help re-establish households so the workers and their families can enjoy the Holidays and quickly get their lives back to the new normal we are all now facing,” said Steve Dutton, president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau and a fifth-generation Sonoma County farmer. He added, “The generosity and compassion of all who have contributed has been simply amazing and has exceeded all expectations.”

For anyone interested in contributing to the housing fund, visit: www.scggf.org to make a contribution. SCGGF is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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About the Grape Growers Foundation

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation (SCGGF) was first established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) organization to help fund educational workshops in Spanish for agricultural employees. Relunched in January of 2016, SCGGF is focused on improving the lives of Sonoma County's agricultural employees and their families, while ensuring Sonoma County remains a place where agricultural workers will continue to live, work and thrive. SCGGF collaborates with various community-based organizations and government agencies to identify existing resources, leverage available support and create new programs to assist local agricultural employees and their families. This includes a focus on healthcare, affordable housing, childcare and education. The Foundation is managed by the Sonoma County Winegrowers with a 12-member board of directors comprised of agricultural leaders, vineyard owners, winery executives, and other Sonoma County community leaders.