The Greater Sacramento Generosity Project To Spark Charitable Giving

SACRAMENTO, Calif., May 25, 2011 — A vision of vibrancy and widespread community commitment to this region's challenged nonprofit organizations was unveiled today by a group of dedicated regional leaders, who have spent the last year learning, in unprecedented detail, the charitable giving habits of Sacramento area residents.

The exhaustive research, known as the Greater Sacramento Generosity Project, was commissioned by the Sacramento Region Community Foundation and the Nonprofit Resource Center, with support from the regional business community, health systems and educational institutions. The quantitative research effort, led by the Center for Strategic Economic Research, revealed that Sacramento regional residents, as a whole, are less likely to give and donate fewer dollars than the national average. However, increases in average donations among those who already give, paired with an increased number of households who financially support charities, could break an entrenched regional status quo that leaves most charitable support up to the same group of household donors and philanthropists.

"Though we are concerned that our local nonprofits aren't getting enough support from the community, we're also encouraged to learn that significant improvement is attainable," said Scott Hanson, who chairs the Generosity Project's Steering Committee.

If successful, the Generosity Project could provide a catalyst that, over the next three to five years, will mark a historic expansion in the base of regional residents who clearly identify charitable giving as fulfilling an essential and personal responsibility to their community's well-being.

The research also supports the launch of a multi-year community outreach campaign scheduled to begin this fall, which if successful over time, will:

- Move the percentage of regional households that give to charities from the current 62 percent, up to at least 67 percent, and hopefully beyond.

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- Currently, giving among households in the Sacramento region lags behind the national average of 66 percent. Reaching the project's goal would boost the number of households that give by about 42,000.
- Increase the average, regional household contribution from $1,990 to meet the national average of $2,355.
- Encourage a significant increase in the share of charitable giving that supports local nonprofits. The research revealed that 91 percent of households surveyed believed it is important to give locally, while only 63 percent of donations were made to local organizations..

Reaching these three main goals of the Generosity Project would increase the amount of contributions to nonprofits in this region by $235 million to $249 million annually, enhancing the ability of local organizations to enrich lives, celebrate artistic expression and extend help to those most in need. Local economic challenges and severe cuts in government services have increased the level of need in our community, putting unprecedented pressure on local nonprofits to meet higher demand for their services, while support for their work remains below national averages. The Greater Sacramento Generosity Project's research results and measurable goals provide a clear roadmap for what can be achieved over time with an improvement in the local culture of giving.

Beyond the intrinsic value of supporting charities' many missions — health care, education, social services, the arts and environmental protection, to name a few — the region's nonprofit community makes a notable contribution to the local economy. Roughly four percent of the region's workforce depends on jobs in the nonprofit sector, representing $2.1 billion in compensation that helps support the economy.

Research for the Generosity Project covered Sacramento, Yolo, Placer and El Dorado counties. Quantitative research was based on interviews with approximately 2,000 households, along with charitable giving data from tax records. Data was also compiled and compared against four benchmark regions: San Jose, Riverside, Kansas

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City and Indianapolis. Tax records alone showed that the Sacramento region is “fairly weak” in charitable giving compared against those benchmark regions, as well as in state and national comparisons.

Among other key findings:

- Households with incomes higher than $200,000 had the most striking negative variance in total giving when compared to their national counterparts.

- Though a much lower percentage of the under 40 age group participates in charitable giving, their average donation compares favorably to the national average.

- Religious institutions (38 percent) and basic needs providers (11.9 percent) receive about half of all charitable dollars. Notably smaller amounts support arts and cultural institutions (3.8 percent) and environmental groups (2.7 percent).

Combined with new donors, the magnitude of increased funding for nonprofits could work towards alleviating community-wide impacts from government budget cuts, benefiting a multitude of causes from those that help youth to ones that support arts enjoyed by everyone.

Interwoven into all the Generosity Project’s goals is placing even greater emphasis on giving locally.

“We are starting a movement of giving by creating a philanthropic culture that will ultimately increase our community’s vitality to an even higher level than what we experience today,” Hanson said.

The Generosity Project qualitative research, led by Vista partners, also encapsulated people’s reasons for giving through stories told by people who donated.

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These anecdotal accounts put a human face on the extensive statistical research. A common thread among many of the stories is donors' having a direct, emotional experience with people a charitable organization benefits, such as receiving updates on the progress of a specific child served by a nonprofit.

The Generosity Project is made possible through multiple project funders, including: Ken and Joyce Adamson; John Finegan; John and Maggie Frisch; Scott and Valerie Hanson; Gary Lardy, of Intelliquote; Mercy Foundation; Dave Lucchetti, of Pacific Coast Building Products; Sacramento Region Community Foundation; the Setzer Foundation; Sierra Health Foundation; Sutter Health Sacramento Sierra Region; Kaiser Permanente; Teichert Foundation; United Way California Capitol Region; University of California Davis Health System; and Western Health Advantage.

About the Nonprofit Resource Center

Founded in 1989, the Nonprofit Resource Center provides comprehensive services and support to nonprofit organizations in the Sacramento region. It offers educational opportunities on all aspects of management, fund development and board leadership, as well as comprehensive information services and networking opportunities. For more information, visit www.nprcenter.org.

About the Sacramento Region Community Foundation

The Sacramento Region Community Foundation is an advocate for quality of life, dedicated to connecting people who care with charitable causes. An effective steward of the region's charitable assets since 1983, the Foundation's mission is to serve as a leader and trusted partner in expanding philanthropy and enhancing its impact in our community. From charitable funds established by individuals, families, businesses and organizations, the Sacramento Region Community Foundation awards grants and engages in leadership activities to address a wide variety of current and long term community issues. For more information, visit www.sacregcf.org.

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