

NAPA VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

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PROGRAM TO CREATE NEW CITIZENS PROMPTS INVITE FROM PRESIDENT

Napa Valley Community Foundation staff will meet with Administration officials to talk about citizenship, celebrate Cinco de Mayo with the President during three-day trip to Washington, DC

Friday, May 1, 2015, Napa, CA – A program launched by Napa Valley Community Foundation (NVCF) to help local residents become US Citizens has earned the organization a trip to the White House next week. On Tuesday, May 5, NVCF President Terence Mulligan and Vice President Marla Tofle will participate in meetings with a small group of key foundation and philanthropic leaders to discuss the recently released Task Force on New Americans report to the President, and a national public awareness campaign planned by the Administration to promote citizenship. Following that substantive meeting, NVCF staff and two special guests will have an opportunity to celebrate Cinco de Mayo at a White House ceremony with the President of the United States.

Victor Loyola, a Napa resident who recently became a US Citizen through the Foundation's *One Napa Valley Initiative*, will attend the Cinco de Mayo celebration, along with Melissa Patrino, the Executive Director of Puertas Abiertas Community Resource Center, one of the Foundation's nonprofit partners for the citizenship program. Donors to the Foundation are generously paying for the travel expenses of Mr. Loyola and Ms. Patrino.

"We are really honored to receive national recognition for the work we are doing in Napa County to help Legal Permanent Residents become US Citizens," said Mulligan. "In all candor, when I got an email from the White House Social Office a few weeks ago, I thought it was spam and ignored it," he continued, noting that the invitation asked for his social security number and date of birth. "When the White House called me to follow up, I was surprised that our citizenship work was on their radar. I'm so pleased, and proud, that we'll be able to attend and talk about the progress we are making with the *One Napa Valley Initiative*."

Since the Foundation's citizenship project began in the summer of 2013, more than 25,000 residents have been reached with information about the benefits and requirements of citizenship; nearly 1,000 clients have received legal consultations or participated in new English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, a number that represents more than 10 percent of the County's population of Legal Permanent Residents, or Green Card holders; 348 people have submitted applications to become citizens; and 216 people have actually become US Citizens.

The *One Napa Valley Initiative* (ONVI) was started on the heels of a 2012 study on the economic and fiscal impact of immigration in Napa County, which was funded by NVCF and conducted by a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, DC. That study, the first-of-its kind for the region, underscored the substantial economic contributions made by immigrants in Napa Valley, and also pointed to a significant citizenship gap: many immigrants in Napa County are eligible to become citizens, but they haven't done so nearly as frequently as their peers around the state.

"Only 30 percent of Napa County's foreign-born population have become citizens versus 37 percent in California overall," said NVCF President Terence Mulligan, noting that the scarcity of legally-based immigration services in Napa County helped explain the gap. "There are nearly 9,000 citizenship-eligible Legal Permanent Residents in Napa County. When they naturalize, good things happen for their families, and good things happen for the community at large."

Citizenship is correlated with higher family income, higher educational attainment for the children of immigrants that naturalize, higher proficiency in English, and more active engagement in community affairs, Mulligan continued, noting that growth in family income can also be a big boost to the local economy.

Through the Foundation, 129 local donors invested \$1.1 million to make the three-year citizenship campaign a reality. The donors include individuals, businesses, foundations, Napa County's Health and Human Services Department, and all five municipal governments in the region. Mulligan said he hopes the trip to Washington will raise awareness for the project, because the Foundation is actively seeking additional donations to extend the program for another three to five years.

"We got involved because the Community Foundation has a smart plan in place that's going to help the whole community," said Michael Mondavi. "We would encourage others to make a contribution to this effort, as well."

"I'm proud to see Napa Valley Community Foundation recognized by the President for their program that helps people become citizens," said U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson. "Immigrants are an important part of Napa Valley's history, culture and economy; and supporting them to obtain citizenship is beneficial for our entire Valley – for immigrants and non-immigrants alike. Many thanks to them for their great work on behalf of our community."

About Napa Valley Community Foundation

Napa Valley Community Foundation helps donors transform their passion for giving into greater impact. Now celebrating 20 years of service to Napa Valley, NVCF has served as a bridge between philanthropic families and hard-working nonprofit agencies since 1994, bringing people, ideas and resources together to enhance the quality of life in our community. From American Canyon to Calistoga, NVCF has distributed more than \$35 million in grants since it was founded, and currently serves as the philanthropic partner to 100 individuals, families, nonprofit agencies and corporations in Napa Valley. To learn more visit napavalleycf.org.

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