

ANNUAL REPORT
2015

STORIES



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
SONOMA
COUNTY





Dear Friends,

Storytelling is an ancient art that shares memories, teaches lessons, and preserves history. The big story of our endeavors in the past year has plot-twisting chapters and colorful characters.

Sonoma County's unique communities are among those characters, each having a distinct personality. Yet countywide, overarching themes of challenges emerge: educating children to prepare them for the future, providing for basic human needs, and expanding philanthropy through innovation. The saga takes many forms and is shared with us every day.

Not so long ago, we launched the Early Childhood Education Initiative preparing every Sonoma County child for kindergarten. Three years later, the resulting iRead program is having measurable positive impacts on families simply through encouraging reading to children.

Another story of our year recounts one woman's generosity and caring. Through a \$4 million endowment to the Community Foundation Sonoma County's Basic Human Needs Fund, nonprofits who deliver services to low-income people in crisis receive funds to provide shelter, food, medical help, and other basic needs.

The legend of Community Foundation Sonoma County is always one of partnership. In 2015, we became the community investment partner for Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, which raised \$4.5 million with the generous support of Sonoma County winemakers and grape growers. As the event and partnership grows, so will the philanthropic impact.

Other stories chronicle our expansive new community-based giving circles, Impact 100 Redwood Circle and LGBTQI Giving Circle, both now making grants to nonprofits of their memberships' choosing, expanding grantmaking in unique ways.

Finally, the setting of our memoir has changed with new offices in Stony Point Business Park in Santa Rosa. We invite you to visit and share your own story with us.

The Community Foundation Sonoma County story has no end as we write new chapters filled with stewardship, solutions, and connections. We listen to the stories of our donors and the needs of the community. We share tales of organizations and individuals to stimulate new ideas and collaborations. Thank you for all you do and continue to do to contribute to the narrative of Sonoma County.



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GIVING

HOTEL HEALDSBURG FUND

Stories shared within families are often passed down, influencing generations. The tales may include history lessons, family peculiarities, chance encounters, and cherished events. Some family stories tell of good deeds and positive traits handed from generation to generation. In the ongoing story of real estate maven Merritt Sher, we have learned that his career was passed down from his father. Merritt's mother Sylvia afforded him a legacy of generosity: giving back to her communities through support of the arts and medicine.



PAM SHER AND HER DAUGHTER CIRCE

Respected as one of the country's most innovative real estate developers, Merritt has been called "the philosopher of place." He developed, among many other innovative projects across the country, Hotel Healdsburg and H2 Hotel. These community assets have helped define the wine country lifestyle of Sonoma County and turned Healdsburg—and the hotels—into desired destinations for people from around the world and around the block.

In addition to his legendary ability to see the potential in locations, Merritt was also quick to recognize and appreciate the people who worked with and for him. At Hotel Healdsburg, he learned the names and stories of many employees—their children and families, their hopes and aspirations. He never failed to take the time to speak with them and to keep abreast of their lives. The story of Merritt's attention and care is being paid forward through funds established by himself and his family at Community Foundation Sonoma County.

The Sher family is grateful to the Healdsburg community for the opportunity to operate a business in its town and has shown their appreciation through the establishment of a Healdsburg-focused, donor-advised fund. When Sylvia passed away, Merritt, his wife Pamela, and his three grown children decided to invest their inheritance from her into the local community.

Having previously discovered the ease of working with the Community Foundation, they continuously support unique community-defining organizations related to the arts, the environment, healthcare, and educational issues.

Most recently this year, a scholarship fund was established in recognition of Merritt's strong employee relationships. Daughter Circe, a partner in the hotels, shares, "In honor of his caring about the people that work at the hotels, we created this fund for current employees or their children. They can apply for scholarships to improve their education and pursue their dreams. Community Foundation connected us with 10,000 Degrees.

WHAT'S YOUR FAMILY STORY?

They are a great organization for creating and administering scholarship funds." The scholarships will help students from all socio-economic backgrounds to earn college degrees or equivalent—and expand their opportunities to succeed in life.

Pam and Circe make decisions on how to support Healdsburg through strong involvement in the community. Circe serves on the advisory boards of Russian Riverkeepers and Healdsburg Jazz Festival. She is known to be one of the most active

users of the Community Foundation's online donor portal, which allows her to easily and efficiently allocate funds to organizations and causes of their choosing any time, any day. Pam appreciates the ability to pick up the phone and speak to a trusted advisor at Community Foundation Sonoma County.

Working with her daughter, Pam appreciates the point of view they each bring to their philanthropic decisions. "The fact that we represent two generations here has been so valuable. I may have some ideas, and Circe may have some other ideas. We are able to talk about these things and share our perspectives. Her youthful opinion tempers mine," she shares.

The Hotel Healdsburg Fund tells a story of the flexibility and efficiency of using the structure of a community foundation for philanthropy. Donors can be as deeply involved in making decisions on grants or can call on the Community Foundation's staff members for advice and assessment of community needs and projects. As they continue their family legacy stories, families can tailor their funds to their interests or communities.

Merritt Sher's life story reflects his unique blend of deep personal concern for others, wisdom, and intuitive business success. In his own words, "Challenge yourself to trust in your intuition and beliefs . . . the pattern will move in the right direction on its own."

PASITOS

Seated behind her desk deep within the warren of the Community Action Partnership's offices in Santa Rosa, Marta Tilling is carefully explaining something about young children.

"Five is way too old," Tilling says firmly.

Tilling and her Pasitos program are focused on reaching a younger age group, the three-year-olds who are too young for preschool but who are old enough to begin preparing for what she hopes will be at least 12 years of formal education.

Meaning “little steps” in Spanish, Pasitos primarily serves the children of monolingual Spanish-speaking parents, many of whom were born in Mexico.

The 22 groups throughout the county, made up of about 15 families each, meet for an hour and a half weekly during the school year—preferably at the school the children will later attend. Book bags and craft supplies are provided during the structured sessions, and reading preparation is a main focus. The Spanish-language program’s model involves parents in its weekly meetings, allowing them to learn along with their kids. In fact, while the children are being taught to sit when asked, raise their hands to be called upon, and participate in story time and group activities, the parents are learning what it means to be their child’s “first and most important teacher.”

A recent study published in the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* indicated that while Latino children have the same language and cognitive abilities as their white peers, by the time they enter kindergarten, they lag significantly behind.

“Our goals for the program evolved around what we want the parents to know,” Tilling, a former kindergarten teacher, says. “We want the parents to know what it takes to encourage language development. Talking to your baby, singing with your child, reading more to your child, narrating the day, asking open-ended questions. Talk, talk, talk,” she laughs.

Pasitos received a grant in January 2015 from Community Foundation Sonoma County as part of their Early Childhood Education Initiative, which allowed Community Action Partnership to add two new playgroups in Northwest Santa Rosa.

WHO INSPIRED YOU TO READ?

Each playgroup needs around \$16,000 each school year to operate, which Tilling estimates comes out to about \$1,000 per family, per year. “It’s cheap,” she says, adding that the “downstream” benefits of this early childhood education more than justify any initial financial outlay.

Tilling points to the work of University of Chicago economics professor James Heckman, who has

documented a seven to 10 percent lifetime rate of return on the financial investments made in early childhood education.

“If you enter school behind, the gap just gets bigger,” she explains. “If you don’t have reading proficiency by third grade, then you get even further behind because up until third grade, you learn to read and after third grade, you read to learn. So, if you haven’t gotten it by then, the rest of the class is moving ahead and you’re falling more behind.” By contrast, children who receive high-quality early childhood education are more likely to finish school and attend college (see the iRead story on page 9 for more details).

Launched at the Roseland Clinic in 2008 with just one playgroup and 10 families, Pasitos has been embraced by Santa Rosa City Schools, which is using Title 1 funding to expand the playgroup program in its schools. “That’s what we’ve really wanted,” Tilling says. “We want the schools to really take ownership of these families, even before they get to school.”

For Tilling, helping local families to help their children succeed is truly the bottom line. “The families that we work with want so much for their children to be successful and they are so optimistic,” she shares with a smile. “They came to this country because they want something better for their kids and they want to know how to do it.

“So we help them learn how.”

iREAD READING HAPPENS ALL THE TIME

131



On TV: The iREAD TV spots have run 131 times to date and are scheduled to run for a second year.

27.907



iREAD materials distributed within Sonoma County: 27,907 (includes posters, postcards and bookmarks)

125



The iREAD FM radio spots have run 125 times. Another round of 125 airs July 1 through Dec. 30, 2016.

15,000



iREAD grantees distributed over 15,000 books.

2,500



2,500 backpacks distributed to Sonoma County youth through the School Readiness Backpack Program

90%



90% of parents in the United Way of the Wine Country's School Readiness Backpack Program reported that it increased their knowledge of how their children learn.

22



22 bus routes ran our campaign in Rohnert Park, Cotati, Santa Rosa, Windsor, and Petaluma.

70% > 5X



Prior to families participating in Pasitos, 34% of parents read to their child five or more times per week. After participating, 70% read five or more times a week.

Once upon a time, in a beautiful place bordering the ocean and graced with ancient redwood groves and bountiful fields, some children had more advantages than other children. To assist those with fewer resources, leaders in Sonoma County invested in young children to ensure their long-term healthy development by convening local organizations as a part of countywide collaboration for early childhood education. Together, they worked to coach families of young children on how their personal attention, home environment, and actions could change their children's futures.

Research shows a gap long before children reach kindergarten: At-risk children who do not receive a high-quality early childhood education are

- 25% more likely to drop out of school,**
- 50% more likely to be placed in special education, and**
- 60% more likely to never attend college.**

Community Foundation Sonoma County launched its Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECE) in partnership with schools, government, and educational organizations. Taking the lead in one area, the Community Foundation has focused on building early literacy skills through

increasing parent and family time spent reading to children—the iRead program. Studies show that reading aloud is the single most important thing a parent or family can do to help children prepare for reading and learning in school. The iRead initiative has three core strategies: to expand parent engagement with early literacy, to increase access to books, and to implement a comprehensive community literacy campaign.

**THANK
YOU
FOR SUPPORTING
LITERACY!**

In just three years, data and success stories are coming in. The iRead campaign is one strategy aimed at public awareness. But iRead doesn't just mean sitting on the couch and saying, "I read books." iRead means "I can read everything, everywhere." Families learn that they can also read signs and cereal boxes, that any family member can read to a child—or even if they can't read, talk about the pictures in a book. Part of this iRead process is just slowing down and spending time together.

Community awareness grows through word-of-mouth, posters, bookmarks, and bus, radio and TV ads. Simultaneously, the iRead grants

program is in play. Grants to community-based organizations such as The Volunteer Center, Alliance Medical Center, River to Coast Children's Center, and LandPaths have been awarded to purchase and provide access to books as well as share the iRead message. Public and school libraries, health centers, and nonprofits also receive materials and posters.

Programs like Pasitos (page 6) bring parents and children together to learn basic skills such as sitting in a circle, raising their hands, singing, and doing projects. In this community, parents are also taught techniques for reading to their children.

Another partner, United Way of Wine Country, makes and distributes School Readiness Backpacks filled with bilingual books, a dinner plate that illustrates good nutrition, and a booklet on engaging children.

We are writing new chapters to this story every day. If it had a moral, it would be found here: A mom with a child entering kindergarten in the fall was seen crying. When asked why, she shared that before Pasitos, she never knew how important it was to read to her child. She did not realize that it was crucial to have expectations about her child's education from the start—that the early years mattered and that she would have to be so involved. Her tears expressed her gratitude for having learned these lessons about her role as her child's first teacher.

LEGACY SOCIETY

We gratefully acknowledge members of the Legacy Society who have chosen the Community Foundation Sonoma County to steward their future planned gifts.

Beth and Joseph Aaron
Tania Amochaev
Ellen I. Amsterdam-Walker and Donald B. Walker
Judith and Paul Archambeau
Maile and Warren Arnold
Nichole and Todd Au
Lori and Chris Baker
Phyllis and Chris Baldenhofer
Barbara Banke
Christina Barasch and Stephen Yingst
Diana and Steve Barclay
Sharon Bard
Genevieve Barnhart
Charlotte and Leon Beck
Margaret Beeler and Thomas R. von Tersch
Stephen A. Bessone
Judith C. Bjorndal and Ron Wallachy
Alan Bloom
Cynthia Boaz and Jason Liles
Brennie and Larry Brackett
Ellen and Drew Bradley
Libby and John Brady
Suzanne Brangham
Linda Brekken and Tom Bakke
Mary and F. James Brock
Lawrence Broderick
Sara and Dixon Browder
Barbara D. Brown
Elizabeth Brown
Kate Burroughs and David Henry
Karen and Leland Bushnell
Cindy Butner
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Blythe and Robert Carver
Dwight Cary
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Suzanne and Doug Castino
Norma and Lee Chandler
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Lynn Woznicki and Ray Holley
Barbara Young
Gloria and Jeffrey A. Young
Gwen Zeller
Anonymous (20)

Estate of Gloria A. Hattie
Estate of May Ganster Miller
Estate of Susan Miller
Estate of Linda E. Nishikawa and Fay H. Blair
Estate of Marjorie Pattison
Estate of Joyce U. Remak

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES: 461 GRANTS

\$4,309,400



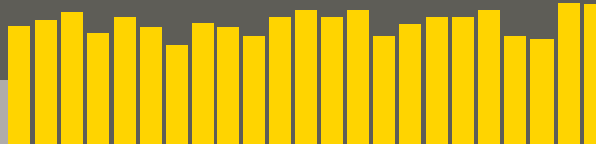
EDUCATION & SCHOLARSHIPS: 347 GRANTS

\$2,835,700



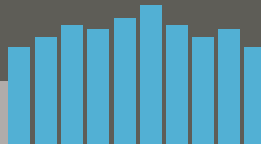
ARTS & CULTURE: 106 GRANTS

\$2,511,200



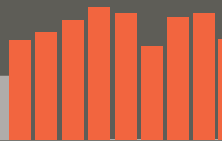
OTHER: 90 GRANTS

\$1,049,100



ENVIRONMENT: 79 GRANTS

\$1,022,500



ANIMAL WELFARE: 22 GRANTS

\$255,900



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
SONOMA
COUNTY

FOR MORE DETAILS AND OUR
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

sonomacf.org

TOTAL ASSETS 2015:

\$147,980,700

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS 2015:

\$14,796,900

NUMBER OF UNDUPLICATED
2015 GRANTEEES:

394

NUMBER OF GRANTS MADE IN 2015:

1,105

TOTAL AWARDED IN 2015:

\$11,983,800

NUMBER OF GRANTS, 1983-2015:

13,000+

TOTAL AWARDED, 1983-2015:

\$181,346,000

GIVING 2015



SONOMA VALLEY FUND

The Sonoma Valley Fund was established in 2007 with a mission to strengthen its community through philanthropy and legacy giving. Since its inception, the Sonoma Valley Fund, in partnership with the Community Foundation Sonoma County, has awarded over \$3 million in grants and scholarships in Sonoma Valley.

In 2015, six Sonoma Valley nonprofit organizations were selected to participate in a multi-year program to increase their organizational capacities. Each nonprofit received a small grant to work with an organizational development consultant to create a plan for increasing their growth, efficiency, and effectiveness. The six organizations include ArtEscape, Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley, La Luz Center, Sonoma Overnight Support, Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance, and Teen Services Sonoma.

Through a robust legacy giving program, the Sonoma Valley Fund has secured 46 individual and family legacy gifts, representing almost \$9 million in revocable gifts.

In 2015, over \$340,000 in grants and scholarships were awarded in Sonoma Valley—all thanks to the generosity of donors.

HEALDSBURG FOREVER

As it continues to evolve to meet the needs of the populations it serves, our north county affiliate, supporting both Healdsburg and Geyserville, introduced a new name, Healdsburg Forever (formerly the Healdsburg Area Fund), as part of a larger branding effort to raise its profile and reach more prospective donors.

For the second consecutive year, Healdsburg Forever awarded \$100,000 in grants to 14 nonprofit organizations working to address urgent community concerns. Since its inception, Healdsburg Forever has granted \$630,000 to 38 nonprofit organizations and has grown an endowment totaling \$1.3 million.

Over the past three years, the Board of Directors has been working to increase the Healdsburg Forever Endowment through future estate gifts. The Harmon Heald Legacy Society was launched in 2015 to recognize the individuals, couples, and families who will leave their mark by bequeathing future funds to Healdsburg Forever. The Harmon Heald Society currently has 34 members, and these individuals have revocably pledged over \$7 million in future funds.

sonomacf.org

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

PEPPERWOOD PRESERVE | pepperwoodpreserve.org

Educates and engages our community through habitat preservation, science-based conservation, leading-edge research, and interdisciplinary educational programs. In 2015, Pepperwood was part of the Sonoma County team recognized by the White House as a national Climate Champion.

OLIVER RANCH FOUNDATION | oliverranchfoundation.org

Promotes artistic appreciation for site-specific sculpture and performances and protects the natural beauty of the land. In 2015, the Oliver Ranch Foundation launched a docent program to help increase the educational reach and value of the sculpture ranch.

CHOP'S TEEN CLUB | chopsonline.com

Provides a safe, fun, and productive place where teens engage, connect, and discover their true potential. In 2015, Chop's expanded their college, career, and workforce development programs to meet the growing needs of young people in the community through the introduction of their College & Career Hub. Teen participation increased by 15 percent overall.

SONOMA PARADISO | sonomaparadiso.com

Dedicated to ensuring the health, education, welfare, and quality of life for the children of Sonoma County. In 2015, Sonoma Paradiso made a total of \$80,000 in grants to 19 different organizations.