



*PHOTO ATTACHED*

## **Community Foundation Sonoma County grants \$700,000 to Sonoma Land Trust to protect critical open space land at Sonoma Developmental Center**

**(SANTA ROSA, CALIF., June 24, 2019)** — Thanks to the vision of a family that cared deeply about the future of Sonoma County, the Sonoma Land Trust has received a \$700,000 grant from Community Foundation Sonoma County and their regional affiliate the Sonoma Valley Fund to protect more than 700 acres of open space, trails and natural resources at the site of the former Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). This grant is made possible by a 2009 bequest to the Foundation from Hazel and Roland Todd to help fund projects benefiting health, human services and open space protection, primarily in the Sonoma Valley. Funding from the Community Foundation will be used as a match for land acquisition and management costs as part of a coordinated, multi-agency effort to connect SDC's remarkable open space with 9,000 acres of adjacent parks and protected lands.

Elizabeth Brown, president and CEO of Community Foundation Sonoma County, speaks to the legacy the Todds have left for the community: "The Todds' Sonoma County roots ran incredibly deep. Roland Todd's family had been in Kenwood since 1852, and the Valley was a unique and special place for both Roland and Hazel. We are so honored to continue to share their story through our grantmaking in partnership with the Sonoma Valley Fund, and we hope that the community will keep their memories alive and share in our gratitude when they visit this beautiful open space."

According to John McCaull, land acquisition program manager for Sonoma Land Trust, "The legacy of protecting SDC's open space land as a future park and wildlife corridor also honors its legacy of care for people with developmental disabilities. The Todds wanted their bequest to support priorities that linked human health and environmental protection, and that is what SDC has brought to Sonoma County for over 127 years."

In December 2018, the State of California closed SDC as a residential hospital for people with developmental disabilities. The 200-acre developed campus along Arnold Drive in Eldridge (the census name for the property) is nestled in the middle of a much larger — and wilder — 900+ acre landscape that stretches from the slopes of Sonoma Mountain to the Valley floor.

After nearly four years of negotiations over the future of SDC, local lawmakers delivered on their promise this year to craft a deal with the State of California for protection of the property's open space and wildlife corridor lands, while also funding a reuse plan for the 200-acre developed campus. The \$43 million agreement — which was approved by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on April 5 and is included in the State's FY 2019–2020 budget — funds basic upkeep of the campus and infrastructure for three years and provides \$3.5 million to Sonoma County to create a specific plan for SDC pursuant to the County's general plan.

While the County administers the specific planning and community engagement process, there is a parallel effort led by state and county park agencies to prepare for expanding Jack London State Historic Park and Sonoma Valley Regional Park to include SDC's open space lands. Funds from the Community Foundation grant will be used for the purchase of a conservation easement over portions of the SDC property, and to fund the rehabilitation, restoration and improvement of the property's trails. All parties are working to make the transfer happen concurrently with the adoption of the County specific plan in late 2021.

Sonoma Land Trust is working in partnership with the members of the SDC Coalition Lands Committee, including Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma County Ag + Open Space, Sonoma Ecology Center, Jack London Park Partners and Sonoma Mountain Preservation.

### **Community and environmental significance**

SDC's open space property stretches from the oak woodlands along Highway 12 to redwood groves high up in Sonoma Mountain's creek canyons; it is also situated in the heart of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, a narrow linkage of wildlife habitat connecting Point Reyes to the mountains of Napa and Lake Counties. Protecting SDC's open space land adds a critical "missing piece" of a puzzle to connect all the adjacent lands, opening an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities and preserving a large greenbelt between Sonoma and Glen Ellen that creates a natural, open landscape and a buffer to development.

Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin has represented the First District — an area that includes the Sonoma Developmental Center property — since 2012 and has been instrumental in negotiations with the State of California about the future of the SDC property. "The Sonoma Developmental Center is the jewel in the crown of Sonoma Mountain — a significant part of the watershed and landscape in Sonoma Valley. The grant to Sonoma Land Trust will help to preserve in perpetuity the undeveloped land on SDC."

"We're thrilled to see this project moving forward with a combination of public and private funding to protect this key open space area," said Bill Keene, general manager for Ag + Open Space. "While we have worked with the State in the past to acquire portions of SDC to add to Jack London State Park and Sonoma Valley Regional Park, we haven't had an opportunity quite like this one to protect such a large piece of land that provides so many benefits to both our human and natural communities. We look forward to continuing to work with the coalition of partners to protect forever this critical wildlife corridor and extraordinary natural area."

A 2015 assessment prepared by Sonoma County Ag + Open Space concluded that SDC is “integral to the character of the Sonoma Valley and the ecological health of the North Bay.” Similarly, protecting the open space lands that serve as critical habitat, riparian corridors, groundwater recharge and the watershed has long been recognized as vital to not just the Sonoma Valley, but to the larger regional community.”

**PHOTO CAPTION:** Hazel and Roland Todd. File photo courtesy of Community Foundation Sonoma County.

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### **About Community Foundation Sonoma County**

Community Foundation Sonoma County is the hub of philanthropy for the county, connecting people, ideas and resources to benefit all who live here. Founded in 1983, CFSC works with philanthropists to create plans that will make an impact in our community and become part of their family’s legacy. In the Sonoma Valley, this work is done in partnership with the Sonoma Valley Fund, an affiliate group of dedicated local advisors who encourage philanthropy in the community and support the foundation’s grantmaking. For more information, please visit [sonomacf.org](http://sonomacf.org)

### **About Sonoma Land Trust**

Sonoma Land Trust believes land is the foundation of our economy and our community’s health and well-being. Since 1976, Sonoma Land Trust has protected more than 50,000 acres of scenic, natural, agricultural and open land for future generations, and is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. For more information, please visit [www.sonomalandtrust.org](http://www.sonomalandtrust.org).  
#ProtectThePicture

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