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Orfalea Foundation Launches Two-Year Project to Document Philanthropic Progress

Santa Barbara, CA -For more than a decade, the Orfalea Foundation has provided private funds for public good, concentrated mainly in Santa Barbara County. The foundation has amassed significant quantitative and qualitative data about its work in early childhood education, school food reform, educational investments, disaster readiness, and youth development.

Over the next two years, the foundation plans to package and share knowledge collected from innovative, on-the-ground practices in Santa Barbara County with stakeholders at the state and national level. “The outcomes and lessons from these investments and strategic initiatives are of interest to non-profits, funders, and policy-makers alike,” says Orfalea Foundation President Lois Mitchell, who has helmed the nonprofit since its inception in the year 2000.

Cofounder and Chairperson Natalie Orfalea adds, “Both in reflection and looking forward, there is much to celebrate. Witnessing systemic changes in as diverse and challenging a community as ours convinces me we can influence important issues on an even broader scale. For example, Santa Barbara County early childhood education centers achieve accreditation at five times the California average, and we know that there are many other communities that want to learn how to reach similar outcomes .”

According to Orfalea, “Our first priority is sustaining the critical components of our partners’ local work and its cultural effects. Then, highlighting and building upon those achievements to encourage state and national level engagement.” The Foundation has compiled data through pre- and post- surveys, onsite evaluations, and third-party assessments, and will be thoroughly analyzing this information and sharing it with stakeholders locally and nationally.

Asked to comment on the value of the foundation’s plan to widely distribute what it has learned, Orfalea board member and Santa Barbara Foundation Trustee Chair Peter MacDougall stated “The Orfalea brand has become synonymous with community change and enhancement. When you realize how much has been accomplished at so many levels, it demonstrates how dedicated and inspired individuals can truly make a difference.”

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Founded in 2000, the Orfalea Foundation supports high-quality non-profit programs that promote healthy development and build skills for success in learning and in life. Across its range of focus areas, including education, school food reform, youth development, disaster readiness, early childhood and community enrichment, the foundation works through collaborative initiatives and entrepreneurial partnerships to strengthen communities by empowering individuals. More info at www.OrfaleaFoundation.org and www.WholeChildAction.org

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES BY EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

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Additional information: *The Orfalea Foundation to document philanthropic progress*

- The Orfalea Fund was designed to accomplish ambitious goals in a concentrated timeframe; we intended to create sustainable results, not perpetual programs.
- The Orfalea Foundation will spend the next two years strengthening our local work and promoting local heroes at the state and national level. Some of the work to be documented includes:

Early Childhood Education

Through coordinated efforts to influence whole child development through center quality, preschool food, and outdoor classrooms, Santa Barbara County preschools achieve accreditation at five times the state average and four times the national average. This contributes to school readiness: In Carpinteria, “...the percentage of Kindergarten ready students more than doubled from 15% to 32% after three years (2009-2012) of focused ECE strategies.” (Three Year Data and Evaluation Review for 2010-2013, Carpinteria Children’s Project at Main)

School Food Reform

The majority of students in Santa Barbara County now have regular access to healthy, scratch-cooked meals prepared by trained food service professionals. The School Food Initiative has trained over 350 food service workers, provided over 5,000 hours of onsite support and \$3.2 million in infrastructure and kitchen grants (expected to grow to \$6.5 million by the initiative’s sunset). In collaboration with Santa Barbara City College, the initiative has installed, enhanced or maintained 35 teaching gardens in county elementary schools.

Youth Development - REACH

Through REACH and its predecessor, Montana Yellowstone Expeditions, over 400 students have learned skills essential for the transition to adulthood. Traditional school settings rarely have the capacity to translate life skills to students in a personal context for REACH subjects like financial literacy, food literacy, first aid, health & wellness, fitness, environmental stewardship, and community involvement.

Education

The Orfalea Foundation has provided over \$14.2 million in scholarships to over 3,400 students in the tri-county region, in addition to partnering in the creation of the UCSB Masters in International and Global Studies (MAGIS) program and the parallel Orfalea Center for Global & International Studies, the Cal Poly Orfalea College of Business, and scholarship endowments to Westmont College and Loyola Marymount University.

Disaster Preparedness & Response

Through coordination with a wide array of community public and private partners, Santa Barbara County now has a 24/7/365 Emergency Operations Center that, according to business and philanthropic leader Ken Saxon, “makes everyone in Santa Barbara County safer.” Focusing attention on the county’s disaster readiness has also resulted in improved communication between agencies and a revitalized emergency volunteer network.