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September 6, 2016

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SONOMA HARVEST WINE AUCTION GROWS RAISING RECORD-BREAKING \$4.6 MILLION

Fund the Future Increases so that Sonoma Kids Can Read and Succeed

Sonoma County, CA – Under a tent that transported auction guests from Sonoma to Marrakesh, the 2016 **Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction** at Chateau St. Jean Winery, sponsored by Visa Signature® and TricorBraun WinePak, exceeded the earnings of prior years with proceeds that totaled more than **\$4,600,000** at the annual fundraising finale of **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend**.

Vintners and winegrowers from across Sonoma County hosted 650 guests who raised their paddles high to support the event that will benefit a number of local charities, and continue the Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction focus upon the **Fund the Future** initiative, a multi-year commitment to improve childhood reading levels across Sonoma County.

Encouraged by **Auctioneer Scott Robertson**, bidders raised paddles throughout the afternoon which began with ambient belly dancers and a live camel, to win lots that ranged from extremely-limited wines, to exclusive trips and experiences.

The top selling lot of the day, the Two Nights of Hollywood Glamour with a trip to the VIP Golden Globes Party and a Private Film Screening was contributed by **Jean-Charles Boisset** and **Buena Vista Winery** and sold for \$220,000.

The highest grossing lot of the day, the Fund the Future Lot which supports the Sonoma County wine industry's childhood literacy initiative, raised over \$2,700,000. Dozens of children from the Boys & Girls Club of Sonoma Valley took the stage along with members of Transcendence Theatre Company, inspiring the audience as they performed the moving hit song "Seasons of Love" from the Broadway musical "Rent."

"Fund the Future is focused upon children's literacy and it's so important for the wine industry to give back," said **Dan Kosta** of **Kosta Browne Winery**, a Sonoma County native, father of three and Sonoma Wine Country Weekend 2016 Co-Chair, "This is so important for us as a community, as 54% of the kids in Sonoma County are reading below grade level, which is not sustainable or acceptable. We need kids to learn to read, so that they can read to learn. If kids can read, they will succeed."

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The top wine-only lot which sold for \$65,000 was a collection of 153 magnums of wine, which celebrated the Ladies of Magnum Force, women of the Sonoma wine world that have raised more than \$500,000 over the last 13 years.

The top bidders of the day were **Joe Anderson** and **Mary Dewane** of **Benovia Winery** who generously supported the event with several purchases, as well as lot donations and the addition of a group of generous bidders from Southwest Florida. Other visiting bidders from New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma were invited by vintner **Robert Kamen**.

The 2016 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Co-Executive Directors **Maureen Cottingham** (Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance) and **Jean Arnold Sessions** (Sonoma County Vintners), along with the members of their Boards of Directors, are thrilled with the **\$5,712,000** gross proceeds that the entire Sonoma Wine Country Weekend raised.

“The commitment and generosity of our vintner and grower community, as well as the support of so many bidders from near and far, are an inspiration,” said Sessions, “In addition to the donations of wine and incredible experiences, Sonoma vintners and growers have made a firm commitment to fund the local children’s literacy program for another three years.”

“The Sonoma wine community is fortunate to have been able to put Sonoma on the worldwide stage, by working hard to collaborate and give back. Supporting Sonoma County is what Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is all about,” said Cottingham, “Sonoma offers world-class wine and food, in one of the most beautiful, and definitely the most welcoming, wine regions in the world. Year after year, it is truly amazing to see vintners, winegrowers, and bidders give more and more, while still having so much fun!”

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is the signature three-day celebration of Sonoma County’s wines, winegrowers, chefs and the independent, generous spirit of this world-class wine country destination. For more information about Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, visit SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com.

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About 2016 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Sponsors and Beneficiaries

As Sonoma County’s leading annual wine fundraising event, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend brings the wine industry, chefs, and guests together to invest in our community by supporting youth and children for future success, preserving our environment, and improving health and welfare of our local communities.

A partnership between Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers and Sonoma County Vintners, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend features Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Estate Vineyards, Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction at Chateau St. Jean, Sonoma Starlight at Francis Ford Coppola Winery, and an assortment of

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intimate and exclusive winery lunch and dinner parties at multiple locations throughout Sonoma County. To date, more than \$24 million has been invested in Sonoma County's future. For more information visit SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com.

About the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance and Foundation

The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) is a non-profit trade organization serving over 500 members who share a mission to promote awareness of Sonoma Valley's grapes, wine, and history as the birthplace of the California wine industry. Sonoma Valley comprises five of the seventeen American Viticulture Areas (AVAs) of Sonoma County: Bennett Valley, Los Carneros, Moon Mountain District, Sonoma Mountain and Sonoma Valley. For more information on the SVVGA and SVVGF, please visit SonomaValleyWine.com.

About the Sonoma County Vintners

Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) is the leading voice of Sonoma County wine, dedicated to raising awareness of Sonoma County as one of the world's premier wine regions, noted for its heritage of artisan winemaking, distinct growing regions, and extraordinary quality. Founded in 1946, SCV represents more than 250 wineries and affiliated business throughout the county. Learn more about SCV at SonomaWine.com.

About 2016 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Presenting Sponsor Visa Signature® & Visa Infinite®

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by Visa Signature and Visa Infinite. Visa Signature and Visa Infinite offer account holders a range of benefits that provide special access and can save time and money. In addition to points, miles, cash back and other premium rewards offered by Visa Signature partners, account holders enjoy perks such as 24/7 complimentary concierge services, the Visa Signature Luxury Hotel Collection and exclusive offers for fine wine and food, travel and sports and entertainment events. For more information on Visa and issuers offering Visa Signature, visit VisaSignature.com.

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