

Sharing the Wealth

By Laura Gallop



VCCF is housed in this spacious office building in beautiful Camarillo

When Livingston Memorial Visiting Nurse Association and the Hospice of Camarillo decided to join forces, the operational cost of the merger ran over \$100,000. While Livingston was prepared to absorb this expense, officials from the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF), after meeting with Livingston representatives, awarded a \$105,000 grant to cover these costs. VCCF President and CEO Vanessa Bechtel explained that the merger made sense because the organization now would not only be able to provide seamless and more effective services to terminally ill patients and their loved ones, but also make better use of limited financial resources. The funding was provided from the Ruth Daily Livingston Fund, which was created to support health care services — a perfect fit.



VCCF presents a grant to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Oxnard & Port Hueneme. (L to R) BGCOP President Robert Page, VCCF President & CEO Vanessa Bechtel, BGCOP CEO Erin Antrim and VCCF Chief Compliance Officer Jim Rivera

Community foundations exist in many regions as vehicles designed to house donations and funds which are designated for the social improvement of a given geographic area. VCCF was established in 1987 and has focused on building philanthropy throughout Ventura County. The foundation invests capital entrusted to it by generous donors. There are a variety of types of funds that can be created including scholarship funds, donor advised funds and nonprofit agency funds.

Bechtel is pleased that over the past year, VCCF has been able to award several six-figure grants (such as the Livingston grant) for unrestricted capacity building. This type of grant is not as common as project-specific grants, however nonprofits are eager to take advantage of unrestricted grants that they can use to build their organizations. VCCF also awarded a \$200,000 capacity building grant to FOOD Share, a Ventura County nonprofit that feeds over 74,000 residents each month, recognizing that the new CEO Monica White was vastly improving the organization's structure and effectiveness.

Through open Requests for Proposals (RFPs), VCCF accepts grant applications throughout the year for a variety of types of programs, determined by the parameters of its various donor-advised funds. In addition to grants, VCCF also awards approximately 1,000 scholarships each year to college and graduate school students. Information on all of these funding opportunities can be found on their website, vccf.org.

Bechtel notes that VCCF is an excellent resource for Ventura County families to create charitable funds. "We have a well-developed model for setting up a fund that helps all members of a family feel connected. They want to feel that they have a say in the process."



Vanessa Bechtel awards a scholarship to a local college student

The advantage of working with VCCF rather than setting up your own charitable fund is not only that VCCF's excellent team has expertise in handling all of the details, but also that the cost is far less. The annual fee is just a small percentage of the assets under management. Bechtel suggests that any family with less than \$50 million in assets will be better off setting up the fund through VCCF rather than doing it independently.

After weathering some challenges under a previous board and executive staff, Bechtel is pleased that VCCF has regained its strong financial footing, having set aside one year of operating reserves — reflecting significant progress over the past few years. The Camarillo building VCCF purchased has very favorable financing and expects to welcome a new tenant occupying 40 percent of the space early in the New Year. Additionally, VCCF is the only nonprofit in the country in which all board members have earned a Certified Foundation Endowment Fiduciary Certification. Under this strong stewardship, VCCF is better equipped than ever to work with philanthropic individuals, families and organizations to manage funds that will benefit the community through scholarships and grants. For further information, please visit vccf.org or call 805.484.2700.



Vanessa Bechtel presents a generous capacity building grant to Jennifer Caldwell, Events Manager at FOOD Share