



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Brings Home Critical Funds For Charity
Labor Day Weekend Event Gross Totals Up, Top \$1.4 Million
Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction Wraps the 4th Annual
Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Presented by Visa Signature**

(Sonoma County, CALIF.) — With the nostalgic theme of “**Sonoma Homecoming – Vintage 2011**” plenty of memories were created during the **Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction**, the grand finale of the fourth annual **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, September 2 – 4, 2011** which raised essential dollars in support of a multitude of Sonoma County non-profits. Gross proceeds, due to the generosity of more than 4,000 attendees at various weekend events, were in excess of \$1.4 million, up more than \$100,000 from last year.

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, presented by **Visa Signature®**, included winery lunches, barbecues and dinner parties as well as the elegant and unparalleled gastronomic adventure of **Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch** on Saturday which sold out for the second year in a row, culminating with the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars on Sunday afternoon sponsored by **Trilogy Glass & Packaging**.

Following a “grown-up” tailgate party featuring classic and vintage winery trucks, complete with a marching band and cheerleaders, auction-goers at the nineteenth annual Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction enjoyed an afternoon of world-class wine and cuisine from Sonoma County’s hottest vintners and top-notch wine country chefs. Within the Wine Spectator Tent at Cline Cellars, and under the watchful eye and quick wit of Auctioneer Fritz Hatton, more than 500 auction attendees battled for lots ranging from extreme adventures to highly-sought wines to once-in-a-lifetime experiences at locations across the globe. While auction totals are being finalized, early tabulations total more than \$600,000, which is more than was raised in 2010.

The largest grossing lot of the day was the “Fund-A-Need” which raised more than \$140,000 that will be divided equally between the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the Sonoma Valley Hospital.

The hottest of the thirty-five live lots of the event included the Benziger Family Prom Party, Magnum Force and the Lasseter Family Winery lot. The top grossing lot purchased by multiple bidders was the Benziger Family Prom Party which sold for \$62,500—bidders bought “tickets” to an upcoming “prom party” for \$500 per person.

The top lot purchased by a single bidder was the Lasseter Family Winery lot, a “field trip” which sold for \$40,000. It includes the first-ever dinner at the new Lasseter Family Winery with John and Nancy Lasseter prepared by Chef Roland Passot of San Francisco’s La Folie and entertainment by music star Chris Isaak as well as three personalized magnums of Lasseter Family wine decorated with John Lasseter’s “Toy Story 2” artwork.

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Especially poignant was a video tribute to Jess Jackson which celebrated the late vintner and his passions of family, Sonoma County and giving back to the community. The Jackson Family Wines lot includes experiences at several Jackson Family winery properties as well as a twenty-two bottle collection of Jess Jackson's personal favorites. The lot was purchased by John Lasseter.

The ever-popular Magnum Force lot consisting of a library of large format wine bottles was presented by the Magnum Force "Pink Ladies" of the wine industry who performed a choreographed "Hand Jive," which urged bidders up to \$22,000.

"Only in Sonoma will auction-goers experience the lively, spirited and authentic experience of Sonoma Wine Country Weekend," said Maureen Cottingham, Co-Producer, "From the winemakers who come from their cellars to the events to the vintners who host tables at the auction and guests on their private estates for winery dinner parties, the experience is beyond unique."

"We are uplifted not only by the generosity of the Sonoma Wine Country Weekend attendees," said Co-Producer Honore Comfort, "but also by the hospitality, as well as continued giving, creativity and longevity, of the hundreds of vintners and growers from throughout Sonoma County."

The weekend ended with a celebratory post-auction party and special Trilogy 'Glass Reunion Wine Bar' offering ultra-premium and limited edition wines served by some of Sonoma's legendary vintners, keeping in the theme of 'Sonoma Homecoming – Vintage 2011.'

For those who could not attend the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction, yet would still like to participate in the charitable effort, an online auction of additional lots, including many of Sonoma County's finest large format wine bottles and exclusive experiences, is open for bidding through September 9, 2011 at <http://www.winecountryweekend.biddingforgood.com>.

Produced in partnership by the **Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation** and the **Sonoma County Vintners**, the 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend event features the **Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®** as well as the **Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars** and an assortment of additional events throughout Sonoma County. More than 200 Sonoma County wineries, grapegrowers and chefs participate in **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend**, which is presented by **Visa Signature**.

Proceeds from Sonoma Wine Country Weekend benefit local communities and charities serving students, children, farm workers and people in need. To date, more than \$10 million has been raised jointly by the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation and Sonoma County Vintners.

For more information visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com, like it on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/winecountryweekend> and follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/SonomaWCW>.

About Visa Signature

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by **Visa Signature**, a premium consumer payment card bringing cardholders instant access to dozens of perks in addition to the points, miles, or cash back they may already earn. Cardholder perks include access to and discounts at Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, complimentary 24-hour concierge services to assist with travel and entertainment planning, exclusive hotel perks through the Visa Signature Luxury Hotel Collection, and much more. For complete information visit www.visa.com/signature.

About MacMurray Ranch

Nestled in the heart of the Russian River Valley, the historic MacMurray Ranch is home to award-winning Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. MacMurray Ranch crafts a collection of elegant, expressive wines from cool-climate vineyards in premier growing regions. Look for MacMurray Ranch at fine wine shops and dining establishments nationwide, or visit us online at www.macmurrayranch.com.

About 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Sponsors and Beneficiaries

A partnership **between Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation** and **Sonoma County Vintners**, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is California's premier wine, food and social event, taking place on Labor Day weekend each year. The events comprising Sonoma Wine Country Weekend have raised over \$10 million in support to local charities that benefit students, children, farm workers and people in need. The 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by Visa Signature®. In addition to Visa Signature, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend sponsors include: TricorBraun WinePak, MacMurray Ranch®, Trilogy Glass & Packaging, Wine Spectator, Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Magazine, Cline Cellars and Jacuzzi Family Vineyards. For a complete list of beneficiaries and sponsors, please visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com.

About Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance and Foundation and Sonoma County Vintners

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. The Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Foundation (SVVGF) is a non-profit 501c.3 organization that has raised over \$8,000,000 for local Sonoma Valley charities. For more information on the SVVGA and SVVGF, please visit www.SonomaValleyWine.com.

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 1944, SCV represents more than 175 wineries of all sizes throughout the county. Learn more about SCV at www.SonomaWine.com.

Journalists: High-resolution artwork is immediately available. For more information, to speak with an event representative or to inquire about press credentials for the 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend please email or call **Lisa Adams Walter at (707) 255-0300 or lisa@adamswalter.com**. For more information visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com, like it on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/winecountryweekend> and follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/SonomaWCW>.

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