



**For Immediate Release**

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### **2012 California Governor's Volunteering and Service Awards**

Eight Honorees Receive Prestigious Award for Changing Neighborhoods and Lives

**Los Angeles** – CaliforniaVolunteers will bestow the state's highest volunteer award to eight honorees for innovation in the field of service and volunteering that has had a tangible impact on their community, their region and the state of California.

"I'm so excited that tonight we get to celebrate an incredible group of honorees who are passionate and dedicated to improving our communities and engaging others in meeting the needs of our state," said Karen Baker, Secretary of Service and Volunteering.

Secretary Karen Baker and Nancy McFadden, Executive Secretary to Governor Jerry E. Brown, will present the awards at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The 2012 Governor's Volunteering and Service Award winners are the following:

#### **California's Volunteer of the Year - Scott Budnick, Green Hat Films**

This award will honor an outstanding Californian whose volunteer service is exemplary and inspirational. Scott Budnick is known as an acclaimed Hollywood producer behind runaway blockbusters such as *The Hangover* and *Due Date*, yet leaders of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations know him as a tireless innovator who's pushing correctional education to new heights. The incarcerated youth themselves know him as their greatest advocate whose work gave them a fighting chance to steer away from prison gangs and a life of crime, and, rather, toward a life of education for a brighter future. His humble beginnings as a literacy tutor with juvenile justice facilities in the Los Angeles area were only a prelude to the innovations that he would bring. Inspired by incarcerated youth desperate for another chance, Scott was instrumental in the establishment of the Youthful Offender Program, which takes in youth who behaved well during incarceration and gets them to prisons with opportunities and programs. Participants are put on an educational track, which leads many to a college degree on the other side of the bars. Scott Budnick's life-changing work is filled with stories of perseverance and success.

#### **California's Nonprofit of the Year - MEND: Meet Each Need with Dignity**

This award will honor a California nonprofit who has shown an extraordinary ability to leverage volunteers in service to their organization. MEND is the largest poverty relief agency in the San Fernando Valley, which serves as many as 30,000 low-income individuals monthly with a workforce of more than 3,000 volunteers. Faced with potential funding cuts, MEND worked hard to double the number of partnerships with businesses, educational institutions and community groups. As an example of the innovative recruitment strategies applied at MEND, Kaiser physicians staff their clinics and CSU Northridge linguistics students teach ESL classes. They are also creative by using experts in multiple roles. For

instance, MEND's Foodbank recruited volunteer gardeners who not only planted a garden for its hot meals, but also taught children nutritional education in the gardening program, "Seeds to Supper".

#### **California's AmeriCorps Member of the Year - Luciano Mondolo, Playworks**

This award will honor a California AmeriCorps member who has made a substantial impact to their community. Luciano Mondolo is an outstanding AmeriCorps member who came to Chavez Elementary School in Norwalk, CA in September 2011 through Playworks. Norwalk has an over 90% rate of poverty and a transiency rate of 30%. The community's economic challenges had a profound negative influence on its youth, such as bullying, fighting, lack of empathy, and apathy were prevalent at Chavez Elementary, until "Coach" Mondolo showed up. He not only organized recess, to dissuade children from negative behavior and channel their energy into constructive, creative, and exercise-dense play, but he changed the culture of the school, against all odds, to one of engagement and excitement. Volunteers are involved, parents are engaged, and because of successes such as Family Fun Day, the school has continued the culture change. "Coach" Mondolo was able to successfully leverage the assets and relationships in the community to bring about change from within.

#### **California's Business Volunteer Program of the Year - Gap Inc.**

This award will honor an outstanding California business with an innovative, high-impact employee volunteer program. Gap Inc. is a leading global specialty retailer, headquartered in San Francisco, with popular brands such as Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy, Piperlime, and Athleta. Gap Inc. encourages employees to make long-term commitments to the nonprofits with which they volunteer, and views that as the best way for employees to leverage their skills *and* get involved in the causes they care most about. Thanks to this approach, staff can give back to the community in the area of need that has greatest personal meaning to them. For example, at the Larkin Street Youth Services Boot Camp, experienced associates at Gap stores who know how to interview, hire, and manage young employees teach foster youth how to become job ready. In addition, the company's executives volunteer by mentoring nonprofit leaders they invest in to help them develop robust management skills, including communications and marketing. They also help them devise new strategies to cultivate talent and collaborate with peers to achieve better results.

#### **California's Small Business Volunteer Program of the Year - Mendo Lake Credit Union**

This award will honor an outstanding California small business with an innovative, high-impact employee volunteer program. Mendo Lake Credit Union (MCLU), a community-development financial institution serving the Lake and Mendocino Counties, leverages its resources and skills of its employees to improve the quality of life of the area's residents in many dimensions through its low-interest loans, free basic deposit services, free tax preparation, and financial education to those in need. Like many CDFIs, Mendo Lake staff need to help communities in need, but what makes them outstanding is their "Cheers to Volunteers!" program. This program makes volunteering a critical part of employee culture. Indeed, MCLU incentivizes community engagement among their staff by attaching volunteering to employee performance measures and by recognizing those who are most passionate about service.

#### **California's Service Group of the Year - Santa Barbara County CERT Committee**

This award will honor a California service group who has demonstrated an unwavering service commitment to the local community. The Santa Barbara County CERT Committee (SBCCC) brings together Community Emergency Response Teams from throughout the area to share best practices and instill in every resident a culture of preparedness. SBCCC is all-inclusive: every year any member has the opportunity to chair the Committee. Indeed, by coming together under one umbrella, Committee member teams are able to share best practices, standardize regional operations, and make sure that as many county residents as possible

become part of the culture of preparedness, standing ready to aid those around them in times of disaster. This committee has graduated over 3,000 CERT-trained residents within Santa Barbara County. In the last three years, SBCCC has developed relationships with city and county governmental agencies, nonprofits, residents, and representatives of businesses and philanthropic organizations. They care deeply about each and every resident of the county who, due to lack of training, could lose his or her life. To that end, the Committee organized robust outreach to teens and Latinos, to increase their representation in CERT.

### **California's Faith-based Organization of the Year - The Peninsula Clergy Network**

This award will honor an outstanding faith-based organization which actively engages volunteers in addressing community needs. The Peninsula Clergy Network (PCN) is the nation's first association of all clergy in a region, which includes a regional database of 440 clergy and 310 congregations and mapping of all those resources. The PCN has transformed the relationships between the religion sector and the education, business, government, and social services sectors, therefore greatly expanding the congregational responses to meeting community needs. This now dynamic network can be tapped for rapid and continuing volunteer response not only to natural disasters, but to a variety of social-service projects, including food drives, cause-related donations, tutoring and mentoring of youth and young adults. The PCN sets the stage for meaningful dialogue among the connected clergy and congregations, which brings greater understanding among faiths, and for government and nonprofit entities, who see the Network now as the go-to for tapping resources from the faith community.

### **California's Foundation of the Year - The California Endowment**

This award will honor a California-based foundation that has made a successful investment in service and volunteering models in addressing community needs. The California Endowment is a private, statewide health foundation dedicated to the idea that our health depends on the places where we live, learn and play. The Endowment has made an unparalleled commitment of 1 billion dollars over the next 10 years to help transform underserved communities in our state through the Health Happens Here campaign. As part of the campaign to create healthier schools and neighborhoods, the Endowment has partnered with CaliforniaVolunteers to support 76 AmeriCorps members who are mentoring youth in 10 communities throughout the state.

To learn more about these awards and CaliforniaVolunteers, visit [www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org](http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org).

### **About CaliforniaVolunteers**

*CaliforniaVolunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives to increase the number of Californians involved with service and volunteering. Through its innovative web site, individuals and families can find more than 50,000 volunteer opportunities throughout the state involving the arts, education, animals, disaster preparedness, the environment and other areas of interest. Karen Baker, the nation's first state cabinet secretary of service and volunteering leads the organization. For more information, please visit [www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org](http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org).*

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