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Contact: Tamara Murray, 415.901.0111 ext. 241, tmurray@fenton.com

Seven Californians Honored with 2010 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards

*\$750,000 Total Awarded for Inspiring Work on Health Care, Education, Ranch Land Conservation,
 Solar Energy for Low-Income Homes, Foster Youth, Diversity in the Health Workforce*

Elected and Appointed Officials to Honor Recipients at Sacramento Event

SACRAMENTO — The James Irvine Foundation will announce and honor the recipients of the 2010 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards at an event in Sacramento today. Now in its fifth year, the awards celebrate extraordinary leaders who are advancing innovative and effective solutions to significant state issues. The awards aim to publicize proven solutions that can inform policymaking and better the lives of more Californians.

The seven recipients, described below, will receive six \$125,000 awards and additional support from the Foundation for their organizations. (Two co-recipients will share one of the awards.)

Following recognition by legislators on the California Assembly floor, recipients will receive their awards from elected and appointed officials at an event at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento.

Award Recipient	Presenter
Dr. Ellen Beck, UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic Project, San Diego	California Assemblywoman Mary Salas
Judy Burton, Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, Los Angeles	California State Board of Education President Ted Mitchell
Sam Cobbs, First Place for Youth, Oakland	California State Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg
Dr. Katherine Flores, UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research, Fresno	California Assemblyman Dr. Edward Hernandez
Erica Mackie and Tim Sears, GRID Alternatives, Oakland	California Assemblyman Sandré Swanson
Nita Vail, California Rangeland Trust, Sacramento	California State Senate Republican Leader Dennis Hollingsworth

“In tough economic times, it’s easy to focus only on what’s wrong in our state, but we should not lose sight of inspiring, transformative results that Californians are achieving on some of our most daunting problems,” said Jim Canales, president and CEO of the Irvine Foundation.

“These extraordinary individuals have created successful models we can, and should, replicate across our state.”

For more information on this year’s recipients — including longer summaries, videos and photographs — visit: www.irvine.org/leadership.

Nominations for the 2011 awards — which includes \$125,000 in organizational support, plus additional resources so that recipients can share their effective program models with policymakers and others — are open until July 9, 2010. Nominations can be submitted online at www.irvine.org/leadership.

Recipients of the 2010 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award are:

Dr. Ellen Beck, UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic Project, San Diego

Dr. Ellen Beck’s free medical clinics in San Diego serve patients and doctors alike. They catch thousands of patients who fall through the county’s safety net (San Diego, uniquely, does not have a county hospital), while training doctors to care for society’s least-privileged. The project, directed by Dr. Beck and managed mostly by medical students, began in 1997 in a church basement with three doctors and five students, holding bake sales to pay for supplies. Today, 500 students see 2,000 patients annually at two churches and a school. They provide free, comprehensive care (medical, dental, medications, mental health counseling and acupuncture) for people who do not have insurance or qualify for government aid — and even make house calls to the homeless. Through contributions and volunteers, the clinic’s average cost per patient is a mere \$800 per year, and many graduates start their own practices in underserved communities.

Judy Burton, Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, Los Angeles

A 30-year veteran teacher and administrator in the L.A. Unified School District, Judy Burton left her job as a district superintendent in 2003 to lead the Alliance, which now includes 11 high schools and five middle schools. The schools — which have drawn some 5,600 mostly Latino and African American students from a district where test scores and graduation rates lag far behind the already-low state averages — have quickly become a model for reform, dramatically outperforming traditional schools in the same communities. In 2009, five Alliance high schools ranked among the 12 top in L.A., and every 2009 graduate was accepted to college. Burton attributes success to the schools’ focus on high student expectations; small schools and classrooms; more instructional time; highly qualified teachers; engaged parents; and adapting approaches based on data. The Alliance intends to open four more schools this year, and eventually grow to 50. Recognizing its potential, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently selected the Alliance to participate in a \$60 million teacher-effectiveness initiative.

Sam Cobbs, First Place for Youth, Oakland

Each year, more than 5,000 foster youth in California turn 18 and must leave group homes and families to fend for themselves. The odds are against them: 65 percent are homeless within a year, more than half are unemployed, and 70 percent of state prisoners have spent time in foster care. Sam Cobbs’ nonprofit — the state’s leading provider of housing and other services

for foster youth — employs a variety of programs to turn the tide. Starting at age 16, “youth advocates” prepare foster kids for independence, with coaching on staying in school, finding housing and jobs, and avoiding pregnancies. At 18, youth can live in First Place-rented apartments that are subsidized until occupants earn enough from jobs. The results: Eighty-six percent of youth end up in stable housing, 70 percent attend college, and program “graduates” are three times less likely to be arrested or become pregnant before 21 than other foster youth. This success has allowed First Place to grow rapidly, and they will be expanding into Los Angeles in July.

Dr. Katherine Flores, UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research, Fresno

About half of Fresno County’s residents are Latino, but only five percent of doctors are, which can lead to misunderstandings — and poorer health. As the child of migrant farm workers, Dr. Katherine Flores witnessed the often tragic consequences of this divide first hand, including a grandfather who lost his leg to diabetes and infection. She also struggled in undergraduate and medical school. Today, those experiences inform her work, as she helps prepare local students for medical careers while encouraging them to come home to practice. In 1999, Dr. Flores established the Doctors Academy, which recruits students from low-income families, beginning in 7th grade, and supports them through high school and college with special classes, tutoring and work experience. The Academy prepares students — and parents — for the rigors of higher education. In a city where one-fourth of students drop out by their senior year, the Doctors Academy is achieving impressive results: Every student has graduated from high school and been accepted to college.

Erica Mackie and Tim Sears, GRID Alternatives, Oakland

California’s low-income homeowners spend more of their earnings on electricity than affluent residents but cannot afford energy-efficiency upgrades and solar panels. To change this, Erica Mackie and Tim Sears left engineering jobs in 2003 to start GRID Alternatives. They scout out rooftops receiving enough sunlight in low-income communities to benefit from solar power. If homeowners are willing, they can team up with GRID Alternatives, a licensed contractor, and volunteers to install solar panels. The installation is usually free: state incentives cover most costs, and GRID Alternatives defrays other expenses through grants and sponsors. Clients can reduce electricity bills by 75 percent, and the 400 systems installed to date will save \$8 million over the life of the equipment — and prevent 38,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. A partnership with PG&E and Habitat for Humanity will mean solar power is featured in all new Habitat homes in PG&E areas, and GRID Alternatives was selected as the manager for California’s Single-family Affordable Solar Homes program that will enable up to 7,000 low-income households around the state to access free solar power.

Nita Vail, California Rangeland Trust, Sacramento

As California’s population grows, new development is consuming thousands of acres each year that were once ranch lands. The state’s privately owned grazing lands help protect wildlife and water quality, provide Californians with locally grown food and are vital to rural economies. A fourth-generation rancher, Nita Vail has helped bridge the historically contentious divide between rural landowners and environmentalists. Her Sacramento-based nonprofit offers ranchers alternatives to selling their land for development, including conservation easements:

voluntary agreements that preclude future development while providing cash and tax deduction to the rancher. This keeps large areas economically viable — and in family ownership — at a fraction of the cost of outright acquisition. The Trust has protected 200,000 acres of California ranch lands, and more than 100 ranchers are waiting to preserve 500,000 more acres. But threats still loom: Vail estimates that up to 70 percent of the state's grazing lands could change hands over the next decade.

About The James Irvine Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society. The Foundation's grantmaking focuses on three program areas: Arts, California Democracy and Youth. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided over \$1 billion in grants to more than 3,000 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With \$1.4 billion in assets, the Foundation made grants of \$67 million in 2009 for the people of California.

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