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WG Edge Partners with Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation to Create Opportunities for Women in Agriculture

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (November 15, 2021) – With its stated goal to preserve the legacy of agriculture in Sonoma County, the Women Gaining an Edge (WG Edge), a local leadership development program aimed at strengthening the region’s agricultural workforce, announced today that it will make a grant to the Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation to administer the program.

WG Edge was created by Judy Jordan, formerly of J Vineyards and Winery and founder of Geodesy Wine, with the goal of advancing the next generation of women leaders in agriculture and wine. Core tenets of the program include scholarships for women studying ag at SRJC, internship opportunities through business leaders, and connectivity to a network of women leaders in the local wine and ag community who advise and open doors for the recipients on their career paths.

“We are excited because WG Edge and the Grape Growers Foundation are aligned in our missions to be a champion for and strengthen our agricultural workforce, who are critical to sustaining farming in Sonoma County,” said Jordan. She added, “Working together to build future leaders we believe will amplify the positive impact on our ag community.”

Supporting the next generation in Sonoma County is critical to the health of Sonoma County’s workforce. As with many areas in the country, in recent years, Sonoma County has experienced a notable loss of younger members of the workforce who have moved to bigger cities and other states in search of better opportunities. If Sonoma County can provide a pool of skilled talent, there will be qualified people who can assume leadership positions and help preserve locally owned companies and ranches.

To address this challenge, WG Edge was established with a big vision and goal to lift up young women in ag and surround them with support. The program has been very successful with 85% of the participants gaining internships during their first year in the program and program “graduates” going on to four-year universities.

“We are thrilled and honored to work with Judy, her team, and WG Edge on this important program to support younger women aspiring to work in agriculture and to participate in their development as local leaders,” said Karissa Kruse, president of Sonoma County Winegrowers and the executive director of the Sonoma County Grape Grower Foundation. She added, “I have personally been part of the WG Edge mentor network over the past two years and have seen firsthand the value of supporting the next generation of women to reach their full potential. We

recently surveyed nearly 1,000 vineyard workers in Sonoma County and learned that 90% of them would recommend agriculture to their family and friends. Now with the WG Edge program grant, we are able to create more opportunities for families to thrive and preserve our agricultural legacy in Sonoma County.”

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About the Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation:

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation (SCGGF) was first established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) organization to help fund educational workshops in Spanish for agricultural employees. Relunched in January of 2016, SCGGF is focused on improving the lives of Sonoma County’s agricultural employees and their families, while ensuring Sonoma County remains a place where agricultural workers will continue to live, work, and thrive. An important mission of the foundation is to ensure the long-term viability of Sonoma County agriculture and support the next generation of the Ag workforce. The Foundation is managed by the Sonoma County Winegrowers with an 18-member board of directors comprised of agricultural leaders, vineyard and winery owners, and Sonoma County community leaders.