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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**COMPLETION OF NEW VALLEY OF THE MOON CHILDREN'S CENTER
CELEBRATED**

"One mission accomplished...many more to tackle"

SANTA ROSA, CA March 18, 2009 --- Over 150 donors, elected officials, county employees and community members gathered last Friday at the new Valley of the Moon Children's Center to celebrate the successful completion of the third phase of an ambitious building project serving abused and neglected children in Sonoma County.

The project came about as a unique private-public partnership between the non-profit Valley of the Moon Children's Foundation and the County of Sonoma Human Services Department. It spanned over ten years and \$25.2 million

County of Sonoma Human Services Department Director Jo Weber welcomed guests, thanked the many supporters of the project and reminded everyone of the reason they were there—for the children. "Our child abuse hotline receives about one call every hour, 24 hours a day, every single day of the year," said Weber. "For some of these children it is not safe to stay in their current situation for even one more day. These are the children that come to the Children's Home. My staff tells me that the

soothing and comforting environment is just about the most important thing we can do to value each child.”

Valley of the Moon Children’s Foundation President Mardi Shepard also expressed thanks to the many individuals and organizations who helped to bring the project to fruition, but reminded guests that although one mission had been accomplished, there are many more to tackle. Said Shepard, “As the Foundation moves forward, we will continue our commitment to the children at the Valley of the Moon Children’s Home and their needs. We will seek ways to implement support to the foster care program, emancipated youth programs, such as our successful Valley of the Moon Children’s Foundation Scholarship program and commit to the continuing challenge of educating the public about the importance of ending child abuse.”

County of Sonoma General Services Director José Obregón, noted that the collaborative effort between county officials, architect and builder paid off. Said Obregón, “Phase III was completed under budget and one month ahead of schedule. The project has received an AIA (American Institute of Architects) citation for excellence in justice design and has been submitted for Silver LEED certification. Not only does the Valley of the Moon Children’s Center serve an important need in our community, the facility itself complements its surroundings aesthetically, functionally and environmentally.”

Sonoma County Supervisors Valerie Brown and Paul Kelley closed the presentation by lauding the overwhelming public and private support for the project and by recognizing the Center as a tangible example to each and every child who enters it of how deeply the community cares about their welfare. Throughout the program, young people who were once residents of the old Children’s Home recited original poems written by themselves or other Children’s Home residents. Following the formal presentation, guests proceeded to a ribbon cutting and tours of the Phase III facility.

The new Valley of the Moon Children's Center is comprised of the new Valley of the Moon Children's Home (Phases 1 and II) and Phase III, which consists of new space for the Redwood Children's Center, a child-friendly facility for forensic interviews of children who may have been molested, and support services for all foster children and foster parents including an equipped medical and dental wing, specialized infant and toddler area, visiting and counseling areas, admissions, and volunteer services. Staff members moved into the new facility in mid-February.

The Valley of the Moon Children's Home, a program of the County of Sonoma Human Services Department, provides temporary care for children in Sonoma County ages newborn through 18 who are victims of abuse, abandonment, neglect, or whose parents or guardians are unable to care for them. It is the only such shelter in Sonoma County. Only four other counties in the State of California own and operate similar facilities.

The public is invited to tour both facilities at a Community Open House on Saturday, March 21 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. The Children's Center is located at 112 Children's Circle, just off Highway 12 at Pythian Road in Santa Rosa. Complete information about the Open House is available at www.vomchildcenter.org.

The Valley of the Moon Children's Foundation (www.vomchildrensfoundation.org) is a private, non-profit, tax- exempt 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to improving the lives of abused, neglected and abandoned children, and children in foster care in Sonoma County. In addition to providing ongoing support and enrichment programs to residents of the Valley of the Moon Children's Home, the Foundation focuses on three key elements: support of emancipated youth, including education, housing and employment guidance; support of children in foster care and foster parents; and community child abuse prevention.

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