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**PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION INTRODUCES NOVEL
“AMBASSADOR PROGRAM” TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS
TO BAY AREA NEEDY**

Grassroots Program is Latest in Series of Maverick Grantmaking Initiatives from the
Man Who Wrote the Book on the Subject

Oakland, CA (November 26, 2007) Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, the Oakland based non-profit foundation noted for their groundbreaking efforts to streamline funding to the worthiest and neediest in the Bay Area, has unveiled their latest initiative, *The Ambassador Program*. Conceived by PVF founder, Bill Somerville, author of the upcoming book [Grassroots Philanthropy: Notes of a Maverick Grantmaker](#), the *Ambassador Program* recognizes the exceptional work of select community service providers and non profits by providing them with an immediate \$10,000 grant, to use at their discretion. Unlike traditional philanthropy, these “paperless” grants require no lengthy application or burdensome review process, relying instead on trusted relationships and acknowledged good work on the part of the recipients.

Notes Somerville “The *Ambassador Program* is a natural extension of our mission to provide funding as quickly as possible to those who need it most and use it best. We have a fifteen year track record of finding and funding outstanding people doing outstanding work. In that time we’ve developed personal relationships with many on the front lines of human service; from individuals who give of themselves to change a single life to large programs that offer hope to an entire community. The *Ambassador Program* is our way of acknowledging their expertise, respecting their commitment and investing in their creativity by providing them with immediate and discretionary funds to use in a way that best meets the needs of those who depend on them.”

The *Ambassador Program* was launched in late October with a simple letter to seven recipients chosen from among the thousands of non profit entities that PVF routinely funds. “The whole notion of the Ambassador program is to democratize the giving process by allowing the recipients to decide how to use the funds.” explains Somerville, “Our relationship with these Ambassadors is built on trust, a commodity we’d like to see more of in mainstream philanthropy”

One of the first groups to benefit from the Ambassador Program is Oaktown Jazz Workshops, based in Oakland. Director Kahil Shaheed plans to use his grant money to fund two programs aimed at improving the lives of youth and elderly alike through music. The first program will provide private music lessons for students who otherwise can't afford the instruction; the second will establish a series of concerts by youth for seniors at East Bay Senior Centers; giving students a chance to perform "professionally" while bringing much needed entertainment and youthful interaction to the seniors.

Upon hearing that he was selected as a PVF *Ambassador*, Shaheed responded "I am constantly amazed at PVF's never-ending ability to come up with new and always fresh strategies to demystify the funding circus that we find ourselves in. PVF not only makes things better, but they do it in a way that makes us, as service providers, comfortable and honored to know them."

PVF plans to grow the *Ambassador Program*, expanding over time, and with additional donors, to recognize more of the committed Bay Area teachers, judges, health providers and non profits who are making a difference in their communities. The foundation's non-traditional, non-bureaucratic model of investing in people who put ideas into action has been paramount in attracting new donors who are drawn to the creative solutions championed by PVF. In the past 16 years, more than 2000 donors have invested in PVF's grassroots approach to philanthropy, many moved by the opportunity to customize their giving to causes they care deeply about. Similarly, many private and community foundations have benefited from PVF's leadership and counsel; inspired to view the potential of philanthropy in a new light. Explains Cole Wilbur, trustee and former president of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation: "PVF's training of hundreds of other community foundations has helped them to use their money with vision and effectiveness. Bill Somerville's approach and ability to build enthusiasm and get boards and staff to change has made a tremendous difference to millions of people in the United States, Canada and Europe."

About PVF

Since its inception in 1991, Oakland-based Philanthropic Ventures Foundation (PVF) has distributed over \$50 million in grants to those who need it most; gaining national recognition for pioneering innovative approaches to grassroots philanthropy. Under the stewardship of Bill Somerville, PVF has operated as a "living lab", incubating first-of-their-kind funding programs including: Immediate Response Grants delivered in less than 48 hours of request; Paperless Grants, requiring a single page request; First Response Disaster Relief, which guarantees \$25,000 to ten designated agencies addressing emergency food and shelter needs for the needy during a natural disaster; and the Juvenile Judges Program, which provides

immediate grants to youth in the foster care system as identified by Juvenile Court Judges. The PVF model champions people and ideas over paper trails and risk aversion in order to maximize the social impact of every donated dollar. In addition to their own programs, PVF works with donors and private foundations to customize their giving to specific areas or programs of interest. Additionally, PVF is called upon regularly to lend expertise to private and community foundations as well as to philanthropic departments of major universities and colleges across the United States. PVF is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity. Philanthropic Ventures Foundation. 1222 Preservation Park Way, Oakland, CA 94612. www.venturesfoundation.org

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