

Anderson Valley ElderHome

PO Box 110, Philo, California 95466
707.895.3889 -- www.avelderhome.org

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July 3, 2006 -- For Immediate Release

Contact: Harvey Morrison, 415 595-6465 (cell)

ANDERSON VALLEY ELDERHOME PURCHASES FUTURE SITE

The Anderson Valley Elderhome (AVEH) has taken a major step toward opening its long-anticipated eldercare facility with the recent purchase of three contiguous parcels in downtown Boonville. The new site is located immediately adjacent to the Senior Center and includes a house, a duplex, and a buildable lot suitable for expanding to meet future needs. Remodeling will begin almost immediately to bring the existing homes up to state and federal standards, with a spring 2007 goal for welcoming the first residents. Together, the house and duplex will provide a flexible mixture of independent and assisted living quarters for up to 10 seniors.

The AVEH is a community-based, grassroots effort that was first envisioned in 1998. The need for elder housing was already painfully evident -- many beloved family members were forced to leave the Anderson Valley to live among strangers if they could no longer stay in their homes. This was hard on the person who had to move, hard on the family, and a loss for the community as a whole. Changing local demographics have made the need for a local facility even more urgent -- the Mendocino Public Health Advisory Board projects that by 2020 40-50% of the county's population will be over age 60. From the outset, the AVEH has operated from the principle that the valley elderhome had to be non-profit, affordable, and community-based and that the overarching goal was to "keep our elders at home in the Valley." It's a philosophy that has kept the community solidly behind the project from its inception.

The AVEH incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with all state certification in 2004. Initially planning to build a new facility, the group began the painstaking process of researching possible sites, none of which proved as suitable or generated as much community enthusiasm as the property just purchased. Local supporters have always been generous with individual contributions to keep the project going, and the new purchase immediately triggered stepped-up giving by a community that is proud of "taking care of its own." The American Legion Post quickly pledged \$10,000 toward the purchase; the Lions Club sponsored a fundraising barbecue and more such events are being planned; and a local resident who wishes

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to remain anonymous voluntarily put up her rural acreage as collateral in lieu of a down payment. "Having lived and worked among this community for almost 30 years," she says, "I know the generosity of its heart and its commitment to 'doing it our way.' I have no doubt that other community members will join me in doing whatever it takes to make this project a reality."

The challenge now is to raise at least \$600,000 over the next two years, first to complete the renovations and ensure that the facility goes into operation as soon as possible, and then to begin paying down the (quite substantial) mortgage so that rates can be kept at an affordable level. The board has developed a broad-spectrum fundraising strategy that reaches out to all segments of the community -- individuals and businesses alike -- to secure both one-time and on-going contributions.

The AVEH has gotten this close to realizing its dream thanks to the efforts of its board of directors and dozens of dedicated volunteers and with financial support from the Community Development Commission, the Community Foundation of Mendocino County, the Tobacco Settlement Advisory Committee, and The California Endowment. The property purchase was greatly facilitated by Marti Lombardi of the Savings Bank of Mendocino County and had the enthusiastic support of the Board of Supervisors, which will allow AVEH to site a new well on county property. Local district supervisor David Colfax spoke for many project enthusiasts when he said that he sees it "as a model for other rural communities that seek to offer affordable care and keep their seniors close to home."

Anyone seeking additional information or wishing to help can contact Project Manager Harvey Morrison at 895-3889, email info@www.avelderhome.org, or visit www.avelderhome.org. For additional information on the value and viability of non-profit, community-based elder care, the "Coming Home Project" section of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's website (www.rwjf.org) is highly recommended.

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