



NEWS RELEASE

YOCHA DEHE WINTUN NATION COMMENDS COMMUNITY FUND PARTNERS

For Immediate Release

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BROOKS, Calif. — On April 11, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation celebrated its Community Fund grant recipients and partners at its 12th annual Partners in Philanthropy Luncheon. Hosted by the Cache Creek Casino Resort, this event drew more than 200 guests representing many of the best local arts, health, education and social-service organizations, as well as local and national tribal groups. New this year was a dedicated area for informational booths and presentations, so guests could learn about the work of other organizations and network.

“We are really excited to have so many of our most treasured partners here today, sharing the valuable work they do for all the communities to which Yocha Dehe is proud to belong,” said Tribal Secretary and Community Fund Chair Mia Durham.

After a blessing by Patwin language teacher Briana Roberts and an introduction of tribal citizens, guest speaker Aurene Martin (Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa) was introduced. Martin is an attorney and the President of Spirit Rock Consulting, a company that specializes in tribal government advocacy. She spoke about the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which since its passage in 1978 has served not only as a protector of Indian children and families, but also as a legal bedrock for Native American sovereignty. Recent challenges to ICWA were thwarted at the Supreme Court level by tribes, tribal organizations, and child welfare groups, several of whom have received funding from the Yocha Dehe Community Fund.

“Throughout the legal process, tribal communities really came together. Our partners in child welfare joined us, states joined us, and intertribal organizations joined us.” Ms. Martin praised the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation for understanding that “our place in the world [is created] by a series of relationships and reciprocal responsibilities. As [the Tribe] has succeeded, it has become more visible. But it is doing the same thing it has always done—taking care of its people and community,” starting with its own citizens, and expanding outward to include Yolo County, the State of California and Indian Country, Martin added.

Yocha Dehe founded the Community Fund in 2000 to provide philanthropic support to organizations working to assist communities in need. From the start, the Fund's defining commitment has been to support enduring programs with the overarching goal of delivering tangible change. The Fund is governed by a Board of Directors made up of tribal citizens and supported by government staff. The Directors meet monthly to review grant applications and to evaluate requests from organizations that meet the Tribe's general requirements. By the end of 2023, the Community Fund had served more than 400 different partners and awarded more than \$40 million in philanthropic aid.

The Fund's six priority funding categories are: education; helping people help themselves; Native arts and culture; Native health and wellness; Native rights and tribal sovereignty; and environmental stewardship. This breadth of interest was evident in the informational booths and presentations at the event, which included Cristo Rey High School, Department of Sound, Firefighters Burn Institute, On Stage Vacaville, Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum, Saint John's Program for Real Change, Vacaville Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club and FRC Team 5458: Digital Mind Robotics, all current or past recipients of Community Fund grants.

This year's Community Fund Certificates of Recognition were awarded to the Vacaville Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club, a Fund partner since 2017, and the Yolo Conflict Resolution Center, a partner since 2018. The Boys & Girls Club provides a safe space for after-school care, where professionals assist the kids with homework and encourage them to engage in the community. "We have lots of fun with the kids too," said Club Board Member Matthew Prosnieski, "that's why they keep coming back!" The Yolo Conflict Resolution Center offers free services to anyone in need of assistance with a conflict, disagreement or other situations where harm has occurred. The Center employs the practices of restorative justice and mediation, with the goal of restoring relationships.

The 2023 Tahtimihn Award ("star" in the Patwin language) went to Autism Speaks, a partner since 2013 whose mission is to create an inclusive world for all individuals with autism throughout their lifespan. Autism Speaks represents the growing needs and concerns of individuals on the spectrum by combining advocacy with clinical, community, employment and comprehensive support programs to help families and individuals live their best lives.

"We are immensely thankful to the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation for their Community Fund grant, which has been instrumental in enhancing our school community toolkit and advancing our work with the Autism Response Team in Northern California...We are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of millions of people," said Keith Wargo, President and CEO of Autism Speaks.

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation is a self-governed, sovereign nation that supports our citizens by strengthening our culture, stewarding our land, and creating economic independence for future generations. We are committed to building strong communities and developing effective partnerships with our neighbors in California's Capay Valley and regionally in Yolo, Solano, Colusa, Lake, and Napa Counties, where our people have lived from time immemorial. (www.yochadehe.gov)

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