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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Merced Irrigation District Launches Charitable Foundation to Serve Community

New, Independent Foundation Will Channel Donations to Worthy Organizations & Programs for Local Impact

MERCED, Calif. – The Merced Irrigation District Board of Directors has unanimously voted to establish a charitable foundation to support local educational, youth and community assistance activities, it was announced today.

Called the Merced Irrigation District Charitable Foundation, Inc., the new, independent organization has its own board of directors and will be supported by donations from MID employees, member growers and local residents, according to Jack Hooper, President of the MID Board of Directors.

"As a public agency, the District was restricted in the past from supporting needy causes and responding to community requests for assistance," said Hooper. "The Merced Irrigation District Charitable Foundation will be able to fill this beneficial role. It's a way of putting our spirit of giving into action."

Charged with the mission of promoting "knowledge of water resources through education and participation in youth activity" and providing "community assistance and individual hardship relief," the Foundation will be managed by a five-member board with representatives from the MID Board of Directors, employees, member growers and the public.

Board members are: Ezio Sansoni, MID member grower and Foundation Board Chairman; Tim Pellissier, farmer and MID director; Robert Telles, MID staff hydrographer; Sharon Gotcher, MID accounting supervisor; and Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo, Executive Director of the Merced County Chamber of Commerce and the member at large representing the public.

"We're embarking on something new with this foundation," Sansoni said. "It will allow MID to give back more to the community. I'm looking forward to seeing how far we can take it."

Sansoni said one goal of the foundation is to support youth activities such as 4-H, Future Farmers of America and other programs. All contributions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

"This foundation will create greater awareness of community involvement on the part of MID," Sansoni said, urging those in agriculture to give to the cause. "Let's be generous so we can have the funds available to assist where needed."

Fellow board member Gotcher said she's excited about the opportunities offered by the new foundation.

"MID employees have been looking for this kind of way to make contributions to the community," said Gotcher. "There were a lot of great programs and organizations that would come to MID for support in the past, but we couldn't help them."

"We're especially interested in encouraging educational activities that teach our young people about the importance of agriculture -- where their food comes from -- how water and farming are connected, and about water issues," said Gotcher.

Because the foundation is locally based and will focus exclusively on local needs and causes, Gotcher said, she's enthusiastic about it being supported by the public. In addition to contributions from MID employees and growers, the group is planning fundraisers, she said.

For more information on the foundation or to find out how you can contribute, call (209) 722-5761.