



GROWING GENEROSITY

“When you drive around and look at what’s going on, things tend to look pretty good. And then you find out that maybe some aspects of your community aren’t as healthy or strong as they need to be,” says Scott Hawley of Torrin Wine, a founding board member of MUST. Hawley and his colleagues created MUST to address poverty and social needs in Northern San Luis Obispo County.



The initial focus of MUST will be to help at-risk and underserved youth. By strengthening after-school and educational programs, healthy lifestyles, sports leagues, and other opportunities for youth, MUST’s founders hope to inspire positive changes that will extend to families and their communities.

“If you radiate out from that need, you find that you touch homelessness. You touch poverty. You touch spousal abuse, family abuse and drug abuse,” explains MUST board member Terry Hoage, of Terry Hoage Vineyards. “We felt if we started with the core, we would find ways of funding, helping, and being proactive in other areas, as well.”

Becky Gray, MUST’s first executive director, joined the organization in February. She is already looking at long-term goals. “If we can reach out to those kids who don’t have the support and infrastructure they need, we can make a big impact in their lives,” she says. “Ultimately, that will break the chain of poverty down the line.”

In gathering the money necessary to fund the new charity, MUST’s founders decided they did not want to divert dollars and resources from existing organizations. So, MUST is developing other strategies. For instance, Eric Jensen, a board member and the owner of Booker Wines,

has added one dollar to the price of each bottle sold in his tasting room. This allows Jensen to raise funds without soliciting donations from the local community.

“The wine industry needs to be a leader in this. We’re the biggest industry in the area, and we need to be out front of charitable giving,” Jensen says.

Rabobank, N.A.’s role in the creation of MUST was to provide seed money, along with guidance on structuring the organization, setting goals, and seeking contributions.

“Without Rabobank’s support, we probably would still be sitting at a dining room table rehashing great ideas. The donation has definitely helped us move things along,” says Sabrina Kruse. She and her husband Doug founded Jack Creek Cellars and also serve on the MUST board. “The additional donation of support and counsel that Rabobank has so graciously given has put us on a business level, instead of a wishful or thoughtful level.”