



## Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance Executive Director Maureen Cottingham Steps Down

SONOMA, CA (March 1, 2021) The Board of Directors of the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance announced Friday that Executive Director Maureen Cottingham will be stepping down from her position after nearly seventeen years of leadership for the Valley's wine marketing organization. Cottingham will step into a new leadership role managing her family's multi-generation farming operation and continue her commitment to California agriculture. She leaves behind an organization that has made a significant and positive impact on the Sonoma Valley region, and plans to work closely with the Board of Directors on the transition and search for her replacement before departing April 2021.

"Maureen's departure, while amazing for her family and the succession plan for her family ranch, is a deep loss to our community and to SVVGA," said SVVGA Board President Prema Behan, Co-Founder of Three Sticks Wines. "We are truly grateful for her bold leadership, unwavering dedication and service to our vintners, winegrowers and community. Her accomplishments are extensive and have consistently elevated and coalesced our wine region over the years. We look forward to continuing the growth and partnerships that Maureen has worked so passionately to achieve. We will miss Maureen, her energy, her professionalism, and her great attitude and wish her the very best of luck as she steps into her new role to continue her family's farming legacy."

Under Cottingham's leadership, the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance has had many achievements which include raising over \$25 million for children's literacy programs and non-profits in Sonoma Valley and across Sonoma County through Sonoma Wine Country Weekend and the Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction. The organization provided critical crisis response and support to the winegrowing community during the Sonoma County wildfires, PSPS events and most recently the global pandemic. Cottingham launched the successful "The Roots Run Deep" brand campaign for Sonoma Valley wines featuring the legendary vintners and growers of the valley and secured the largest grant ever received by the trade organization, a California Specialty Crop Block Grant. In addition, Cottingham restructured the organization's membership and financial position as well as developing a first ever series of vineyard maps curated by legendary wine critic and founder of Vinous, Antonio Galloni and world-renowned cartographer Alessandro Masnaghetti. Cottingham launched the region's first ever, wine-centric lifestyle event Signature Sonoma Valley which has run for three years, an immersive four-day event leaving wine consumers with a deeper connection to Sonoma Valley vineyards and an appreciation for the caliber of wines coming out of Sonoma Valley.

"I have the deepest gratitude to all of those who have been so supportive of the organization and our initiatives over the years," said Cottingham, "and I was honored to be called upon to bring our family's farming tradition to the next generation. My passion for Sonoma Valley and its winegrowers and vintners will always remain strong and while this transition is bittersweet, I look forward to continuing the work that is so important to me, championing California's agricultural heritage and legacy."

The Board of Directors will be conducting a search to identify Cottingham's replacement. Any inquiries about the position should be directed to Maureen Cottingham who can be contacted at [Maureen@SonomaValleyWine.com](mailto:Maureen@SonomaValleyWine.com).

### **About SVVGA**

The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) is a non-profit organization serving over 500 members who share a mission to promote awareness of Sonoma Valley's grapes, wine and history as the birthplace of the California wine industry. Sonoma Valley comprises six of the eighteen American Viticulture Areas (AVAs) of Sonoma County: Bennett Valley, Los Carneros, Moon Mountain District,

Sonoma Coast, Sonoma Mountain and Sonoma Valley. To learn more about the SVVGA visit <http://www.SonomaValleyWine.com> or call 707-935-0803.

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