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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tree of Life Event Marks 7th Year of Success

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Acorn Soupe raises \$206,000 for children and nature

On Saturday evening, as the sun set over the Mayacamas mountains to the west of St. Helena, over 230 guests and nearly 100 community volunteers gathered in support of a small grassroots organization called Acorn Soupe. Even in these times of such polarized viewpoints, everyone in attendance believed in one single mission – Acorn Soupe’s mission – to connect children and our community to nature through hands-on education.

The scene was Spottswode Estate, a vineyard home with landscaping, pathways and gardens that would make even Louis the XIV proud. Guests gathered under the stars for an exquisite feast prepared by Executive Chef David Shalleck, of *Iron Chef America* fame. The first course was a late harvest tomato soup, with Chenel’s fromage blanc cheese and olive bruschettina, basil, and serrano chilies. The Italian rotisserie grill filled dinner plates with BerkRidge porchetta, beef sirloin kabobs, roasted chicken breasts, and fresh summer vegetables. Finally, a slice of Tuscan extra virgin olive oil cake with baked nectarines and zabaglione brought the meal to a triumphant end. But the evening was just beginning!

Tree of Life guests were treated to a unique glimpse into the world of children in Acorn Soupe’s programs. A film narrated by actor Peter Coyote transported the audience to the natural world, filling their senses with sights and sounds of kids in action – learning about nature and restoring their own backyards.

A touching account from Cam Fraser, a long-time St. Helena teacher utilizing Acorn Soupe’s programs in his classroom, helped to convey a message of importance and urgency in connecting more kids to nature. His students’ lives have changed forever because of Acorn Soupe. These programs made a difference and continue to do so!

Acorn Soupe Founder Sandra Perry and Board President Paula Vlaming then set the auction into motion. Auctioneer David Reynolds took the stage by storm as he roused the crowd into a bidding frenzy. Top auction lots for the night included a 6 liter Grace Family Vineyards Cabernet, a dinner from the restaurant *Boulevard* at the home of Julie and Gary Wagner, and Acorn Soupe’s annual sustainable wine collection – Mother Nature’s Magnums. Over 130 silent and live auction lots were bid upon and the work of so many donors, volunteers, and supporters made the evening one that the guests will not soon forget.

“We were delighted to host Acorn Soupe’s Tree of Life Gala at our home. Acorn Soupe is a program that nurtures our children, grandchildren, and the Earth...our most precious assets.”

- Mary Novak, Spottswode Estate

This annual event raised over \$206,000 to support Acorn Soupe’s youth development and leadership programs. Over 1,200 students are enrolled in the school program, offered at ***no charge***. For more information about Acorn Soupe and to see photos from the Tree of Life event, please visit www.acornsoupe.org.

ACORN SOUPE connects children and our community to nature through hands-on education. Our programs allow children and adults to gain an understanding and appreciation for natural ecosystems. Children interact with their peers and adults in a cooperative setting while positively impacting the local environment. The experiences gained from these opportunities instill messages of stewardship and environmental ethics that last a lifetime and provide opportunities for personal growth. For more information, please contact Executive Director Angelina Phillips at 707.254.7284.

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Tree of Life Guests - Bruce Streblow, Ana Canales, and Koerner Rombauer.



Tree of Life Guests – Peter McCrea, Julie Wagner (Board Trustee), and Willinda McCrea.



Auctioneer David Reynolds.



Top lots at the live auction included Grace Family Vineyard and Acorn Soupe's signature Mother Nature's Magnums Collection.



Past Acorn Soupe Teacher of the Year Cam Fraser delivered the keynote address.



Acorn Soupe Board of Trustees – Julie Wagner, Nancy Douglass, Sandra Perry, Cindy Smith, and Paula Vlaming (Michael Buchanan not pictured).



Marcia Mondavi Borger (Left) greets Acorn Soupe Co-Founder Babe Learned.

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