



## PRESS ROOM – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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### The Power of The Pitch: SLO County Rallies Behind Local Nonprofits, Raising Over \$150,000.

**Paso Robles, CA - November 10, 2025** — Something extraordinary, happened last Thursday night at Vina Robles’ New Tasting Room. Must! Charities brought together local nonprofits, business leaders, and community members for an evening that blended passion, purpose, and generosity — and the result was remarkable.

The inaugural event The Pitch, sparked more than applause; it ignited a Give Where You Live movement that inspired over \$150,000 in collective giving to support local nonprofits across San Luis Obispo County.

#### A Night Where Passion Met Purpose

For months leading up to the event, nine local nonprofits worked alongside expert coaches to refine their message, share their stories, and strengthen their ability to connect with the community. The result was a showcase of courage and creativity as six finalists took the stage, pitching their missions in just three minutes before a panel of judges and a sold-out audience of 200 community members.

Participating nonprofits included Cancer Support Community, CASA of San Luis Obispo County, Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), Estero Bay Kindness Coalition, and San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation.

Three cash awards were given to the first, second and third place organizations, and an additional Audience Choice Award, sponsored by The Community Foundation was given to the organization who generated the most funds from the audience voting with their dollars. The cash prizes totaled \$50,000, First place went to El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), Second Place along with Audience Choice award went to Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, and Third place was awarded to Cancer Support Community. In addition to these awards, live audience giving brought in more than \$100,000 for the participating organizations — a powerful testament to what happens when a community comes together.

### **Voices from the Night**

“Participating in The Pitch truly transformed the way I communicate our mission,” said **Dr. Ramona Friedman**, President & Co-Founder of the Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. “Sharing our story in that room — surrounded by people who care so deeply — was humbling and inspiring. It reminded me that our community listens and acts when given the chance.”

“The camaraderie among nonprofits was incredible,” said **Candice Galli**, Executive Director of Cancer Support Community. “It wasn’t just about funding — it was about lifting each other up and celebrating what we can achieve together.”

“I’m deeply honored to have been a part of The Pitch and to collaborate with such an incredible group of organizations and individuals,” said **Stephanie Potter**, Development Manager at El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO). “This experience has been truly transformative — I learned and grew so much under the guidance of my coach, Cynthia Lohr, and from all the participating nonprofits. I’m so thankful for the opportunity to share our mission and our exciting new project, and I’m beyond grateful to the community and Must Charities for the generous funding that will make our Family Wing expansion possible. This experience has filled me with inspiration, confidence, and renewed purpose. I can’t wait to see what the next cohort accomplishes, and I hope to continue being part of this amazing journey.”

### **A Community That Shows Up**

“The Pitch was electric,” said **Becky Gray, CEO of Must! Charities**. “The passion, the courage, and the storytelling reflected exactly what our community stands for — generosity, collaboration, and heart. Every nonprofit walked away with new tools, new supporters, and a renewed voice to tell their story.”

The evening wasn’t just a competition — it was a celebration of community. Together, attendees, donors, and organizations embodied Must! Charities’ belief that giving is better than getting, and that lasting change begins when we invest where we live.

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About Must! Charities:

Must! Charities is a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the model of philanthropy by uniting donors, pooling resources, and investing strategically in our region while empowering

nonprofits and educating our community. From day one, we've stood by a bold promise: every dollar donated by the community goes directly to the causes we champion. This commitment is made possible through Must! Roots, a dedicated funding source that covers all operational expenses, ensuring community giving fuels nothing but impact.

Learn more at [mustcharities.org](https://mustcharities.org)