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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **CALIFORNIA MID-STATE FAIR WINS COVETED MERRILL AWARD**

PASO ROBLES, CA February 11, 2010 - -The California Mid-State Fair has been selected as the recipient of the Western Fair Association's coveted Merrill Award for their new Mission Square and commercial kitchen Project. The WFA made the announcement at its annual convention in Reno, Nevada, January 24-27, 2010. The Merrill Award is the highest honor awarded in the WFA Achievement Award Program and named for the founder of the WFA, Louis Merrill. The award is given to a program or project that "clearly demonstrates innovation, vision and excellence." "To receive a Merrill Award has been a dream of mine during my tenure as CEO," stated Vivian Robertson, Fair CEO. "It is true honor for the community and the many individuals who shared the passion and our agriculture educational goal of Mission Square." The project was a joint effort between the Paso Robles Event Center and the California Mid-State Fair Heritage Foundation, and special recognition should be given to: George Hearst, Jim Saunders - PMD, Don Idler - Idlers, Neil Roberts - Roberts Vineyard Management Services, and Jacky Eshelby - Fair Staff and Cal Poly's Fair Management Professor for their dedication and generosity to the project.

Mission Square originally was awarded for Outstanding Agriculture Programs, and recognized for its unique and innovative ability to educate the adult fairgoer on agriculture issues. The California Mid-State Fair embraced the term "localvore" with farmers, olive oil producers, wineries, chefs and sponsors to prepare the largest locally grown celebration the area had ever seen. Designated as the key spot where the Fairgoer could discover the bounty of agriculture on the Central Coast, Mission Square featured a wine bar, an educational vineyard, visual displays and an entertainment venue. The highlight was the Idler's Demonstration Kitchen, a permanent state of the art culinary experience. With a single goal to help the fairgoer embrace the "buy local" theme and the realization of how much agriculture is actually produced in a 100-mile radius, Mission Square was a unique and sophisticated approach to agriculture education. The Fair

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encouraged the “Learn By Doing” philosophy of Cal Poly, with Agricultural Business Management students who developed parts of the exhibit thru senior projects and the fair management program, founded by Lou Merrill in the late 1970s.

In addition to winning the Merrill Award, the CMSF also brought home first place awards in the following divisions: Competitive Exhibits – Dahlia Show, Facing Challenges – Season Pass Promotion, Fair Logo Contest – “Paso Pete”, Thank You Kerry Donlon, Best New Featured Exhibit – Hee Haw Shootin Gallery. This years California Mid-State Fair runs July 21, through August 1, 2010. This year’s theme is “Endless Summer Fun.”

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