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PRESS RELEASE

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Renowned Actor Rallies Leaders to Support Arts Education

*Giancarlo Esposito Leads South Bay Business and Civic
Leaders in Discussion on the Arts in Silicon Valley*

San José, CA – Giancarlo Esposito, acclaimed film, Broadway and television actor, met yesterday with about a dozen business and civic leaders at a private downtown luncheon to discuss the importance of the arts in Silicon Valley. Esposito was the featured guest of the "da Vinci Forums," a quarterly lunch-time speaker series featuring artists, authors and opinion leaders leading small group discussions on issues of culture and community.

Esposito shared insights into his experiences as an artist, and led the group in an engaging dialogue about the importance of maintaining a vibrant arts and cultural community in Silicon Valley, where technological innovation and other types of creative thinking flourish. Esposito also stressed the importance of arts education as vital to developing the next generation of creative thinkers.

"The arts open a different part of the brain and stimulate creativity, which is very important to an area that relies on technology and other creative industries," said Esposito. "The arts make us a kinder, gentler, more tolerant society, but there is no doubt that they also improve technological skills."

Attendees represented regional leaders from the business, civic and philanthropic community and included, among others, Tom Bondi, Principal with Berger/Lewis Accountancy Corporation; Ann Gralnek, Senior Advisor to the George Frederick Jewett Foundation; Polk Laffoon, Vice President of Corporate Relations with Knight Ridder Corporation; and Leigh Weimers, columnist for the San José Mercury News.

"I don't understand why industry here isn't demanding more music in the schools," said Leigh Weimers. "Our future work force comes from the creative thinking in the elementary schools."

"The community here in Silicon Valley is larger than the San Francisco community, and yet the arts are shrinking here," concluded Esposito. "If we do one thing here to strengthen the link between arts education and technology, it will be one more thing than we did before."

The da Vinci Forums are sponsored by Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley, Community Foundation Silicon Valley, and the Tech Museum of Innovation. Prior da Vinci Forums speakers have included urban historian Sir Peter Hall, Carnegie Mellon University Professor Richard Florida, and former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky.

Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of a comprehensive plan for the cultural transformation of Silicon Valley. Its mission is to advance the vitality of Silicon Valley through broad cultural participation, quality creative education in our schools and a development of an informed and committed leadership in the community.

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