

Education Foundation Raises More than \$400,000 for Santa Monica, Malibu Schools

By Lookout Staff

October 15, 2015 -- Helped by the promise of a \$100,000 matching grant from an anonymous donor, the foundation that conducts independent fundraising for Santa Monica-Malibu schools announced it raised \$439,950 in pledges and donations at its inaugural Pledge Days event.

Ann Conkle, a spokesperson for the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF), said 702 families, employees and others from the community donated or pledged to donate during the district-wide event, as well as the unnamed individual who contributed the six-figure match.

As a result, she said, annual campaign donations are now 70 percent higher than they were at this time last year, when the foundation struggled to meet its then-goal of \$4 million.

“We had an amazing start to the year,” Conkle said. “I think parents are realizing the importance of the programs we help fund.”

The foundation still needs to raise another \$1.7 million from the community by June 30, but the overall amount it will end up giving to the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) should be about \$3.7 million, Conkle said.

Much of that will come from endowments and earned income, she said, adding that none of the funding comes from the District itself.

During Pledge Days --which ran from September 28 to October 9 -- SMEEF and PTA representatives were on hand at a variety of district schools asking parents for their help while dropping off or picking up their children.

Proceeds from the non-profit organization are used for programs that include arts education for the district’s 4,900 elementary students, 87 instructional assistants and enrichment programs for all 16 schools in the District.

Many District schools use the funds to provide science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) or visual and performing arts programs. Some schools also use the funds to hire additional health clerks, shore up on-site counseling programs or offer programs for student wellness.

More fundraisers are slated for this spring, Conkle said. They include a March 5 concert and an April 17 wine-and-food tasting event at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel. It will include online, silent and live auctions, she said.

“We are thrilled that the community came together so positively for our first Pledge Days event, and we are grateful to our anonymous donor for such a generous and inspirational match,” said Kathleen Rawson, President of the SMMEF Board of Directors.

She noted that the donations not only support a variety of student programs but “also show potential corporate and major donors how committed this



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