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Estate Of Late Peggy Bergmann Gifts Education Foundation \$4.8 Million

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BRENTON GAREN / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



The estate of the late Peggy Bergmann has gifted the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation \$4.8 million to establish an arts endowment and address the Foundation's critical needs within the district.

The announcement was made at Thursday's Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education meeting.

SMMEF Executive Director Linda Greenberg Gross said the gift of \$4.8 million was the largest gift in the organization's 30-year history.

"This is a truly transformative gift for the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation and our efforts to support every student at every school in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District."

Greenberg Gross said. "This gift will help us continue the great work that is already happening in our schools, and it will ensure that programs throughout our District can continue in these difficult economic times."

It will be divided into two parts:

- \$2.4 million has been designated to establish an arts endowment for the purpose of providing semi-private music instruction, as well as the purchase and maintenance of musical instruments, for economically disadvantaged students throughout the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. The newly-created endowment will be known as the Peggy Bergmann Arts Endowment Fund, in memory of Lenore Bergmann and John Elmer Bergmann.

- \$2.4 million has been designated as current-use dollars to address SMMEF's critical needs within the District. During the coming months, Superintendent Sandra Lyon will be working with the newly-formed Superintendent's Advisory Council, made up of District, Foundation, and community leaders, to assess the District's most critical needs in determining the best and most impactful use of these dollars.

SMMUSD Superintendent Sandra Lyon said the district was pleased to join with the Foundation to announce the gift that will have "an enormous effect on our schools today and in perpetuity."

"As state funding for public education continues to decline, it's never been more important that we seek support from our communities to ensure continued excellence in our schools," Lyon said. "This is a tremendous step in that direction."

The Bergmann bequest arrives at a time when the District is moving toward a centralized fundraising model in which the Education Foundation broadens its focus from events and annual appeals to major and planned gifts that will create sustainability for important programs at schools throughout the District.

Cultivation of long-term relationships, such as the one that resulted in this gift, is now a core focus of the Foundation's centralized fundraising efforts.

"Gifts like this one – those that impact students and schools District-wide – have to be our focus if we are to achieve equity in our District and give all students opportunities to succeed," said Greenberg Gross.

Bergmann passed away on Dec. 10, 2011. According to Bruce and Sonya Sultan, attorneys for the Estate

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of Peggy Bergmann and longtime supporters of the District and of the Education Foundation, Bergmann had learned of the district's efforts to provide equity to all students through a centralized fundraising model, and she wanted to jump start that effort with this bequest.

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