

E-bike drawing supports SMMEF drive

Jeffrey I. Goodman



Sunlight poured through the west-facing windows at the Treats frozen yogurt shop on Ocean Park Boulevard as theater students from John Adams Middle School sang the title song from “Bye Bye Birdie,” their upcoming play.

“Guess I’ll always care,” they crooned, and the lyrics seemed appropriate considering the nature of the event.

District officials, local business owners and community members gathered Wednesday afternoon at the dessertery to support the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation, which raffled off an electric bicycle as it continues its effort to collect money for school arts, instructional aides and other enrichment programs.

Elle Triedman won the drawing for the marquee prize, a light blue Pedego cruiser valued at about \$2,700. School board president Laurie Lieberman picked her name from a jar containing 166 slips of paper, each one representing a donation of at least \$50 to the educational foundation.

SMMEF raised about \$56,000 through the promotion, which began March 9 and wrapped up Tuesday, according to communications and events manager Ann Conkle. It was a fundraiser within a fundraiser, one of many initiatives by the foundation on its quest to generate \$4 million by the end of June.

The e-bike was donated to the cause by Pedego Santa Monica owners Barb and Steve Wittels, who run a shop on Pier Avenue just off Main Street.

“We’re thrilled to contribute to such an important organization in our community,” Barb Wittels said.

The e-bike will ostensibly allow Triedman, who was not present, to cruise around town without using much energy.

As for the SMMEF fundraising campaign, though, building momentum appears to be decidedly more difficult. The foundation has raised close to \$2.06 million, according to executive director Linda Greenberg, but there are just two and a half months remaining in the drive to reach the \$4 million goal.

School arts activities and other enrichment programs could potentially be cut if the fundraising campaign doesn't reach its target, district Supt. Sandra Lyon has said.

Lieberman said district families don't necessary have donation fatigue but added they're still adjusting to the recently implemented system, which puts SMMEF in charge of a centralized fundraising effort.

"We're changing the culture," she said. "We wish it would go faster, but we're making progress."

For the duration of the promotion the e-bike hung from the ceiling at Treats, which has been an active schools supporter. Wittels and other officials noted the efforts of Treats owner Amy Salko Robertson and her husband, John, in bringing the fundraiser together.

"The Pedego and Treats collaboration has been a tremendous way to encourage our community to donate to SMMEF," Greenberg said.

Other raffle prizes included gift certificates for e-bike rentals and frozen yogurt.

The JAMS Theatre Company will perform "Bye Bye Birdie" four times May 1-3 at Lincoln Middle School. For more information, visit www.jamstheatrecompany.com.

Contact Jeff Goodman at 310-573-8351, jeff@smdp.com or on [Twitter](#).

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