

School fundraisers prevail despite turbulent spring

[Clara Harter](#) | day ago

Despite the chaos and financial constraints brought by COVID-19 this spring, the Santa Monica Education Foundation and PTA fundraising efforts in Malibu raised \$2,068,155 and \$337,543 respectively for the upcoming school year. This funding is essential for many school programs and required a sharp shift in fundraising strategies after in-person events had to be cancelled.

The Santa Monica Education Foundation raised over two million dollars that will go towards K-12 comprehensive performing arts programs, instructional assistants, STEM programs, and wellness resources in Santa Monica's schools.

"It was certainly a roller coaster of a spring, but overall we had a decent year despite the obvious circumstances," said Linda Greenberg, Director of the Ed Foundation, during last Thursday's School Board meeting. "Parents who donated last year, gave more on average this year. Parents who were in a position to give really stepped it up and contributed more and we are very grateful to them."

The Ed Foundation saw a 9 percent decrease in parent participation and a 5 percent decrease in money raised from businesses, which can be attributed to the financial impact of the pandemic, according to Greenberg. Despite this, there was an increase in the size of donations from parents, as families with the ability to contribute were willing to give more. Additionally, there was a 19 percent increase in donations from grandparents.

The Ed Foundation adapted its fundraising strategies around COVID restrictions and moved its annual Wine Fundraiser to an online format. This livestream event took place on May 3rd and raised \$148,000 for arts, STEM, and wellness programs across Santa Monica's public schools.

Over in Malibu fundraising groups faced a moment of crisis in June when the centralized fundraising entity was dissolved and there was a \$275,000 gap in funding for instructional aides and art programs. A one time exception was granted for the Malibu PTAs to donate

directly to the District and they organized an emergency fundraising campaign to attempt to close the gap.

“Our goal was to raise \$275,000 in seven weeks during the pandemic in a community that was still recovering from the Woolsey fire,” said Karin Al-Hardan, the Vice President of the Webster Elementary School PTA, during last Thursday’s School Board Meeting. As part of the fundraising campaign the Webster Elementary and Malibu Elementary PTAs organized an online action from July 24 to 30 which included a wide range of physical goods, workshops, and trips donated by the local community.

The campaign raised \$198,105 in this short time window, thanks to a \$160,000 grant from the Malibu Foundation alongside \$38,105 from parents. As a result, fundraising efforts in Malibu will contribute \$337,543 to the District for the upcoming school year.

Programs at Malibu High School are fully funded for this year and Webster and Malibu elementary schools have fully funded their instructional aides and STEM programs. Unfortunately, the P.S. Arts program at the elementary schools is not funded, but the PTAs will be continuing their fundraising efforts this fall.

“I’d say that if ever there was a PSA for the PTA, This would be it,” said Al-Hardan. “We had a stellar group of parents who stepped forward, and in seven weeks were able to really turn this situation around.”

Both the Santa Monica Education Foundation and Malibu PTAs’ efforts are essential for funding educational programs across the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. These enriching arts, STEM, and learning support programs are especially valuable this fall as students’ activities will be limited by the restrictions of distance learning.

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