

INAUGURAL “PLEDGE DAYS” DRIVE RAISES NEARLY HALF-A-MILLION DOLLARS FOR SANTA MONICA-MALIBU SCHOOLS

By Jason Islas

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU Education Foundation

The Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF) — the Santa Monica-Malibu school district’s fundraising arm — raised nearly half-a-million dollars during its first-annual two-week Pledge Days drive.

According to SMMEF officials, more than 702 families, employees, and community members donated money toward SMMEF’s district-wide fundraising efforts during the drive, which ran from September 28 to October 9. Their donations were matched with an additional \$100,000 from an anonymous donor, bringing the Pledge Days drive’s total to \$439,950, SMMEF officials 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, in an officials statement Wednesday.

“The donations will not only support extraordinary programs for all our students, but will also show potential corporate and major donors how committed this community is to providing an outstanding education to each and every child in our schools,” said Rawson, who is also the CEO of Downtown Santa Monica, Inc., the nonprofit that oversees operations and programming in Downtown Santa Monica.

One donor from each Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District elementary school will win a family pass for four to the Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier, which has donated the family passes to the fundraising effort. All donors from July 1, 2015 to October 9, 2015 are eligible, according to SMMEF officials.

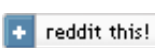
The two-week long drive was part of SMMEF’s annual district-wide fundraising effort, during which the organization is tasked with raising roughly \$4 million. Following the drive, SMMEF officials said that annual campaign donations are now 70% higher than this time last year.

“SMMEF-funded staff and programs include arts education for the district’s 4,900 elementary students, 87 instructional assistants, and enrichment grants for all 16 schools in the district. Many schools use these grants to provide science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) or visual and performing arts programs. Some schools also use these funds to hire additional health clerks, augment on-site counseling programs, or run other programs focused on student wellness,” according to SMMEF officials.

SMMEF Executive Director Linda Greenberg echoed Rawson’s comments.

“We are ecstatic about this enthusiastic response! Donors were inspired by the wonderful \$100,000 match and are committed to seeing that our students receive the best education possible,” Greenberg said in an official statement Wednesday, adding that SMMEF still has to raise \$1.7 million by June 30 in order for the district to provide all SMMEF-funded programs for next year.

In her statement, she noted that “SMMUSD families, community members and business who haven’t yet donated to join our efforts by donating today at smmef.org.”



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Education

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Jason Islas is the editor of Santa Monica Next and the director of the Vote Local Campaign. Before joining Next in May 2014, Jason had covered land use, transit, politics and breaking news for The Lookout, the city’s oldest news website, since February 2011.