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Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation receives \$4.8-million gift

September 20, 2012 | 11:22 pm

The Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation announced Thursday that it has received an estate gift of \$4.8 million that will be used to established an arts endowment for disadvantage children and address other necessities in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

The donation, which was announced at the district's Board of Education meeting, is the largest in the foundation's 30-year history. The gift comes at a time when the district is focusing on raising funds from major and planned donations, as opposed to events and annual appeals, officials 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 times," said Greenberg Gross, executive director of the foundation.

The donation from Peggy Bergmann, who died in December and was a big supporter of the district and foundation, will be divided into two parts, foundation officials said.

Half of it will be used to create an arts endowment to provide semi-private music instruction and the purchase and maintenance of musical instruments for disadvantaged children throughout the district. The endowment will be named Peggy Bergmann Arts Endowment Fund.

The other half will be designated as current-use dollars to address the crucial needs of the district. Supt. Sandra Lyon will meet with a newly formed Superintendent's Advisory Council -- made up of the district, foundation and community leaders -- to assess those necessities.

The Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation was established in 1982 in response to ongoing federal and state education budget cuts. It seeks to ensure equity and access to education for all students. Money raised by the foundation is distributed equitably throughout the district.

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