Giving

Donor-directed giving grows for local causes

After nearly 20 years of awarding community grants, the Sonora Area Foundation’s work as a local funder is very well known in Tuolumne County.

Directors award over $500,000 per year to local nonprofits and community projects through the Foundation’s competitive grants. But those competitive grants are only a fraction of the Foundation’s annual work.

The Foundation’s staff also manages more than 170 funds established by local donors and organizations. Last year an additional $650,000 was awarded for scholarships, grants and charitable cases.

This funded more than 250 grants and scholarships of all sizes. They provided major support for the ATCAA Food Bank and the Humane Society, helped purchase materials for the quilt-making work of the Comfort Project, helped Summerville High School’s award-winning Academic Decathlon team travel to state finals, and provided scholarships for more than 100 local students.

“So many people aren’t aware there is another whole side to our work,” said SAF Executive Director Greg Applegate, “and it’s actually larger than the Foundation’s competitive grant program. Sometimes the grants are specifically designated by donor. At other times, the Foundation’s staff is carrying out the wishes of an individual who left a bequest that established one of the funds. And sometimes, the Foundation simply asks a donor, who they know has an interest in a specific area, such as health or education, if they would like to support a particular project or act on a specific opportunity.

Assisting with donor-directed giving is tremendously rewarding, Applegate said, because he and Program Manager Lin Freer get to connect donors with the causes that are most meaningful to them. Whether that’s fulfilling the intent of a donor who left a legacy fund or helping establish a scholarship in honor of a loved one, making that connection is powerful and positive.

“It’s a remarkable part of the job,” Applegate said. “And it runs the whole spectrum. Some donors like to stay under the radar and keep a very low profile, others are very active. And we also have several undesignated funds, where donors have left a legacy fund for the Foundation to manage for the changing needs of the community.

We can design our services to meet the needs of each individual.”

Sonora attorney Bill Coffill is the advisor on a fund established by his late mother, Margorie Coffill, and he appreciates the Foundation’s services.

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Community

Donors launch fund for school health van

A group of donors working to build on-going support for the Tuolumne County’s BOB! Health Van have launched a new fund at the Sonora Area Foundation.

A fundraising campaign to continue services kicks into high gear this summer, led by Tuolumne County Director of Public Health Dr. Todd Stolp and Superintendent of Schools Joe Silva.

“The van has been a lunch in providing health care services and health education to kids on our rural areas,” Stolp said. “And it became even more critical as we responded to the recent outbreaks of the H1N1 virus and whooping cough.”

Both outbreaks specifically threatened children, and county health officials were able to efficiently and effectively provide hundreds of vaccinations very quickly.

The health van regularly serves every public school in the county, and last fiscal year contributed 2,360 school health services to more than 700 school-age children, health education presentations to nearly 400 students and vaccinations to more than 1,000.

Unfortunately state and federal funding for the van’s services is now dwindling, Silva said, so he and his team must find local supporters to fill the gap. They made an encouraging start with an appeal earlier this year to local employers and a large gift last month from an interested donor.

Establishing a dedicated fund at the Foundation will help get community donors on board, Silva said. It gives the drive consistent visibility, lets supporters make tax deductible contributions to the health van at any time, and the Foundation provides its services at no charge.

To contribute to the BOB Health Van contact Sonora Area Foundation at 533-2596.
A group of people gathered around a table with a plate of food on it. The table is set with a white tablecloth and silverware. People are seated at the table engaged in conversation. The room is well-lit with natural light streaming in through the windows.