

# SMMEF Raises \$400K During Pledge Days

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In an effort to help boost funding for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD), the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Fund (SMMEF) stepped up its efforts and was rewarded with \$439,950 during the very first Pledge Days fundraising campaign. Throughout the 12-day campaign, donations were collected from 702 donors and one anonymous donor who agreed to match donations up to \$100,000.



“We are at a 78 percent increase in donations from SMMUSD families over the same time last year. We have a total year-to-date as of Oct. 14 of \$2,000,033 in donations, which is 54 percent of our operating budget,” Linda Greenberg, the executive director of SMMEF, said.

SMMUSD faculty and staff have also jumped in on the action. According to a SMMEF presentation, 14.8 percent of SMMUSD employees have contributed to the fundraising efforts. Of those who have donated, 49.5 percent were management, 19.3 percent were certificated (teachers) and seven percent were classified employees.

Pledge Days offer potential donors two options when they want to donate to SMMEF. A donor can give a lump sum donation or they can opt for an automatic small monthly recurring donation, Greenberg explained. A pledge donation is a promise to donate a certain amount by a specified date.

“Statistics show us that 90 percent of pledges get completed. We have new ways of giving this year. We are very flexible with our donors,” Greenberg said.

Besides the innovative ways to donate and increased coordination across the district in fundraising, Ann Conkle, communications and events manager for SMMEF, attributes this year’s massive success with the tangible results coming out of the fundraising.

“Parents like all the programs that the fundraising is able to support. Things like art and computer programs are really showing parents the impact that the fundraiser is having in the classrooms,” Conkle said.

The unprecedented success of this year’s fundraising campaign comes as a stark contrast to last year’s efforts. During the 2014-15 drive, SMMEF collected approximately \$2,365,000, which was short of its goal of \$4,000,000, despite fundraising for 17 months. The foundation struggled to educate the community on districtwide fundraising, its then-new centralized funding system, and

battled against low participation.

During last year's efforts, Malibu-area schools were particularly noted to have low participation rates. Malibu High School was at 8.3 percent, Point Dume Marine Science Elementary School at 14.2 percent and Juan Cabrillo Elementary School at 15.2 percent. In comparison, Santa Monica-area schools Olympic High School and the Santa Monica Alternative School House had 80 percent and 72 percent rates of participation, respectively.

The funds will be allocated across the district to 16 schools where they will be used toward art, computer and science enrichment programs. Funds will be also used to hire additional staff.

SMMEF was founded by a dedicated group of parents, community leaders and local business owners in 1982 in response to crushing federal and state budget cuts, according to its website. Since then, SMMEF has aimed to enhance and supplement SMMUSD coffers.