

Ed Foundation raised at least \$110K at Pier Party

David Mark Simpson



SM PIER — In one day, the Santa Monica Malibu Education Foundation knocked out about 3 percent of its annual fundraising goal.

Totals aren't finalized yet but Ed Foundation representatives estimate that the first ever Pier Party netted at least \$110,000 for the organization on Sunday.

In 2011, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education designated the Ed Foundation as the sole organization to raise money for the schools. This switch to centralized fundraising was controversial, with some parents complaining that the money they donated would not go directly to the schools attended by their children.

Vision for Student Success — a program that among other things aims to reduce class sizes and add literacy coaches and art instruction at the schools — was born out of the centralized funding model. Starting last year, the Ed Foundation was tasked with raising \$4 million every year to pay for the program.

They raised \$3.2 million by their Jan. 31 deadline. Half a million came from the Scott Family Charitable Fund last fall. Another \$150,000 came from Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Corp. in December.

The Board of Education voted to use reserves to cover the \$800,000 difference but made clear that it was a one-time deal.

The most the Ed Foundation had been tasked with raising in past years was \$500,000.



FUN DAY: The Education Foundation raised roughly \$110K during the Pier Party on Sunday. (Morgan Genser editor@smdp.com)

On Feb. 1, the total dropped back to zero and fundraising efforts started all over again. The Ed Foundation decided the Pier Party, a large gathering at the Santa Monica Pier, would be a good annual signature event to publicly kick off the campaign.

“We heard pretty clearly from community members and a lot of people who sit on the superintendent’s advisory committee — which has worked on the program that will be implemented with the money — that they wanted some kind of community event that became the main event of the Ed Foundation, that also supported our \$4 million campaign,” said Rachel Faulkner, associate director at the Ed Foundation.

They sold 1,500 tickets, most on the day of, exceeding their goal of 1,300 tickets. That total includes about 300 VIP tickets, which cost \$175 a piece.

There were 32 sponsors of the event, which Ed Foundation officials also consider a successful number.

The total income has been calculated but event organizers are still nailing down the final costs. An exact tally should be released next week.

“It was a great community effort and an opportunity for so many businesses that support our schools to participate in different ways,” Faulkner said.

Because the fundraising effort is year-round and the Santa Monica 5000, a 5K race that benefits the Ed Foundation, is held later this year the spring timing was right, Faulkner said.

Because last year was the first year, and because there was no Pier Party, you can’t compare 2013’s numbers to 2014’s, she added.

Faulkner’s not worried that parents will be tired of opening their wallets after last year’s fundraiser.

“There’s no feeling of burn out,” she said. “In fact, we’re really excited, having worked this out once, that we’ve been able to spend a lot of time this year laying ground for donors. And you’ve got new parents and kindergarten parents coming in.”

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