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Parent Donations Surge for Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation

By Niki Cervantes

Staff Writer

February 8, 2018 -- In a 15-day surge, parent donations at the annual fundraiser for the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF) jumped to almost \$185,000, Foundation officials said Tuesday.

Reacting to a \$50,000 match offered by three corporate sponsors, a total of 698 doners stepped up between January 16 and January 31 to contribute \$184,709 as part of SMMEF's annual fundraising appeal to Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) parents.

Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows/MSD Capital and CIT's OneWest Bank each donated \$25,000 and offered to provide a \$50,000 match for the last two weeks of the SMMEF's parent fundraising campaign, said Ann Conkle, a SMMEF spokesperson.

All funds donated to SMMEF are spread among the district's 16 schools to support staff and programs involving arts, STEM (or science, technology, engineering and math), wellness and "other crucial elements of their education," Conkle said.

"On behalf of our 10,500 SMMUSD students, we are so grateful to Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows/MSD Capital and CIT's OneWest Bank for their leadership," said Linda Greenberg, Executive Director of the Ed Foundation.

"Their enduring commitment to public education makes them true corporate heroes," she said.

Last February, the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation announced it had raised a record \$161,801 to meet a grant challenge from the Fairmont Miramar ("Foundation Raises More Than \$160,000 to Meet Miramar Matching Grant," February 6, 2017).

Last year, the Foundation raised a record \$658,805 as part of a back-to-school pledge drive, with donors contributing \$157,598 on the last day of the match ("Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation Sets Record in Fundraising Drive," September 15, 2017).

SMMEF contributes about \$2.5 million annually to the district to offset cuts in state aid that have impacted many SMMUSD programs.

Although the foundation has been meeting its fundraising goal, the organization was particularly hard hit after some parents from Malibu stopped contributions ("Santa Monica School Board Member Says Malibu Parents Boycotting Education Foundation," May 16, 2016).

The problem stems from complaints from Malibu parents about not being treated as equals by the district, which is based in Santa Monica.

Malibu is now engaged in new battle over splitting with SMMUSD and forming its own district ("Malibu Agrees to Pause in Battle to Separate from Santa Monica Public Schools," December 4, 2017).