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Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation Receives Large Donation

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January 16, 2014 -- The Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF) announced Thursday that it received a \$450,000 donation from Santa Monica resident Judi Lynne, making it one of the largest contributions the local education fundraising group has received in its 33-year history.

This money will go to Vision for Student Success (VSS), which is the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's (SMMUSD) centralized fundraising program.

The SMMEF is in charge of the program, and has an annual goal of raising \$4 million.

"We are so grateful to receive this large bequest," SMMEF Executive Director Linda Greenberg said in statement released by the organization.

"Like all donations to SMMEF, this gift will help ensure that the amazing SMMEF-funded staff and programs in our schools, including teacher training, arts education, additional middle and high school classes, and instructional assistants, continue during the next school year."

The donation brings the fundraising total for the school year to \$1,820,463. The deadline to meet the \$4 million goal is June 30.

"Gifts like this one, which benefit students and schools district-wide, have to be our focus if we are to achieve equity in our district and give all students opportunities to succeed," Greenberg said.

"We hope this gift will inspire parents, community members and corporate partners to join us in funding these vital programs for every student."

The SMMEF was designated as the exclusive group in charge of local public education fundraising in a controversial November 2011 decision by the school board ("[Santa Monica-Malibu School Board Approves Controversial Gift Policy](#)," December 1, 2011).

Prior to this, PTAs were allowed to raise money for individual schools. Some people said this created a major inequality among the district's schools.

The argument against allowing PTAs to collect money and donations for individual schools was that those with better fundraising skills or a wealthier fundraising base were able to collect more money that paid for teacher assistants, equipment and other features of so-called premium programs.

Donations can now only be made directly to the school district through the SMMEF, and the money is distributed equally to the schools via the VSS, foundation officials said.

Officials called VSS "a comprehensive set of programs designed to improve



student achievement and success.”

“VSS programs include instructional assistants, literacy coaches, art instruction for every elementary grade, additional class sections for middle and high schools, professional development for teachers and instructional assistants, and discretionary grants for school-specific enrichment programs,” officials said.



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