

Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Make a big difference by giving small

When thinking about charitable donations that make a big difference, it's easy to point to the million-dollar gifts as examples. To be sure, large gifts provide tremendous resources to nonprofit organizations. The recent gifts to French Hospital Medical Center for the cardiac care center from the Forbes, Copeland and Rossi families and others are certainly large in size and impact. These gifts have allowed the hospital to develop a much needed, leading-edge center for diagnosing and treating heart disease. A less obvious but equally important benefit is that these gifts signal a philanthropic focus on health care in the county in ways not previously seen.

While large donations are to be encouraged, it is important to remember that it's not only these major donations that have a big impact on nonprofit organizations. Occasionally, smaller gifts can have the same transformative effect.

How can smaller donations have the same impact as larger gifts? Consider first a small donation that is the right gift made at the right time. For example, a donation to an

educational foundation that allows a teacher to attend a workshop transforms the teacher as well as the students who will benefit from the teacher's additional training. A small gift can also have a high impact when it allows a nonprofit to take advantage of opportunities to leverage the money into additional gifts. The following two examples illustrate this point.

Planned Parenthood in San Luis Obispo is trying to expand its facility. Planned Parenthood has arranged to match every dollar of private support with \$5 from a state grant. If Planned Parenthood can raise \$40,000 in private donations, it will be able to use a \$200,000 grant from the state of California. This is a good example of leveraging and shows how small gifts can have large impact.

A second example is the project to install wastewater treatment systems at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden's new Education Center. Through the generosity of the Greg Hind Foundation, the Botanical Garden is able to turn every dollar donated to this project into \$2; and \$25,000 remains to be raised. This

project has the added feature of allowing the Botanical Garden to become the only location in California that has all three state-mandated

wastewater treatment systems. Once installed, the Botanical Garden will be able to generate additional income from becoming a training institute for individuals and organizations throughout the state.

These are two local examples of how small donations can have large impacts. Nonprofits are wise to find ways to leverage donations in meaningful ways. At the same time, nonprofits must use this strategy sparingly because it is the collective impact of small gifts through annual campaigns that is the lifeblood of organizations. Overuse of matching or challenge strategies will dilute the importance of annual gifts.

For more information about these projects or how your gift of any size to either one can have a large impact, please contact Alicia Morin, development associate, Planned Parenthood, at 549-0941; and Elizabeth Scott-Graham, executive director, San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, at 785-0248.

Resource Use

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

Nonprofit Business Column of The Tribune

The San Luis Obispo Tribune publishes a column every other Tuesday in the Business section dedicated to the business practices of nonprofit orgs. Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes the bi-

weekly column to help strengthen nonprofit organizations in the community. Each column is reprinted here as a one-page handout for use by local organizations. Barry can be reached at 543-2323 or by e-mail at barry@slocf.org.