

Del Rey Takes a New Approach to Fundraising

By Lee Borrowman

What's a Parents Club to do when nobody has time to put on an auction? At Orinda's Del Rey Elementary this year, the answer was to find another way to raise money. The first Del Rey Annual Fund campaign raised \$229,950 by the end of the school year, nearly \$100K more than the school's annual auctions had averaged over the past four years.

"Our plan was to form a small committee and approach each family in the school to ask for their support," said Bob Dureault, the campaign's co-chair. "It was simple and direct, and best of all it gave everyone in the school a chance to participate." Committee members scheduled twenty minutes visits to each family's home to explain to parents why the school needed their support.

According to campaign co-chair Alec Binnie, the Parent Club contributes \$800 per student to the school. "25% of the school's budget comes from voluntary parent contributions," explained Binnie.

Parents Club co-President Carolyn Parodi said, "Not only did we surpass our fundraising goals, we were also able to better educate parents on how critical these funds are to directly delivering educational programs to their kids."

75% of Del Rey families contributed to the campaign. The ten-member campaign committee found that an Annual Fund has many advantages that an auction does not. Parents were able to leverage over \$20,000 in corporate matching gifts, including generous contributions of software and hardware. A substantial contribution from a family foundation sent the numbers soaring. Because all of the donations went directly to the school, rather than in exchange for something with monetary value, the parents' contributions are 100% tax deductible. The Annual Fund campaign had virtually no overhead, so all donations can be used to fund school programs.

Due to the campaign's unprecedented success, the Parents Club can eliminate

several other fund-raisers next year; just imagine....no gift wrap to sell! It has also been much easier to fill vacancies on next year's Board because no one suffered from auction fatigue: "Rather than folks being burnt out or currently involved with planning the auction, we had people calling us and stepping forward to volunteer," said Parodi.

The Parents Club has established a long-range planning committee to determine how best to spend the unexpected windfall. The committee is talking to parents, teachers and administrators. High on the teachers' wish list is funding for classroom assistants and other programs which provide opportunities for more individual attention to students.

It appears likely that this success can be repeated. "The participation rate among our kindergarten through second grade families reached nearly 90% and generated more than 60% of our donations," said Binnie. "We are going to do just fine next year."

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