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Educational Foundation of Orinda opts for professional leadership

By Sora O'Doherty



After almost 40 years of successful fundraising to benefit Orinda schools, the Educational Foundation of Orinda has decided to hire an executive director to drive donations higher than the current annual plateau of just over \$1.5 million. Over the course of its existence, the EFO has provided over \$27 million to Orinda's seven public schools, which are among the lowest funded in the state. Local revenue sources fund 32 percent of educational programs in the district. Orinda schools consistently rank in the top 1 percent of California public schools.

EFO President Shauna Simmons said that the superintendent's fundraising taskforce put together a group to look at best practices in fundraising for public schools. The group examined 15 demographically comparable districts and concluded that the EFO has not been as effective as others. In particular, the Manhattan Beach Education Foundation, Piedmont Education Foundation, and the Palo Alto Partners in Education

Foundation stood out as models for improved fundraising. It was therefore decided that a highly skilled professional director should be hired to manage the fundraising efforts for Orinda schools.

The EFO will also operate as an umbrella organization over the parents clubs that raise funds for each individual public school in Orinda. The EFO fundraising goal is \$1.635 million for the 2017-18 school year, which, together with Parents' Club fundraising efforts of approximately \$3.5 million, are the local revenue sources that provide for many programs above and beyond that which could be funded by the ordinary state school funding. The EFO has concluded that centralizing fundraising has worked well in other communities and that it should improve fundraising in Orinda too. The goal of hiring an executive director is, with significant collaboration from the Parents' Clubs, to create a lasting organization that will continue to serve Orinda students for generations. One of the responsibilities of the new executive director will be to develop a centralized district fundraising vehicle with the ultimate goal of "one ask" per child per year to meet current and future financial goals.

Currently the EFO is almost completely volunteer-led, with only a part-time administrator. The new executive director position will offer a competitive salary, and the EFO expects to find someone with a high level of skills, who is a relationship builder, volunteer leader, and strategic thinker with a proven track record of attracting and sustaining a broad base of volunteer and financial support as well as have proven effective communication skills. The position will be full time, but will offer flexible hours. The group seeks a leader who is genuinely passionate about building an organization for the future of education, and expects that the salary of the executive director will be more than covered by growth in fundraising. It is possible that more paid positions will be added in the future.

The EFO hopes to move quickly to hire an executive director. The deadline for applications is March 15, or until filled.

A search committee is being formed, led by parent volunteer Jodi Kaelle, who has 20 years of experience as a professional recruiter. The goal is to begin interviews in March and hire soon afterward.

The EFO has made a series of frequently asked questions available online at www.orindaefo.org. For questions or more information, email EFOEDSearch@gmail.com.

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