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Live here, give here

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By [Adam Breen](#)

Community Foundation to launch 'Give San Benito' campaign to benefit nonprofits

With a goal of encouraging people to give where they live, the Community Foundation for San Benito County is preparing to launch a "Give San Benito" campaign June 1.

"The whole purpose is to think local and give local," said Stephanie Hicks, director of community outreach and leadership development for the foundation. "It's for everyone: from the seniors who live here to the commuters that leave here. This is our home, this is where we live, and this is where we want people to give."

The idea is for the Community Foundation to be the vehicle through which local residents can give to local nonprofits - including those that don't have the means to promote their fundraising needs online.

"We want to send the message that giving is for everyone and every dollar helps," Hicks said. "Everyone can make a difference in San Benito County."

As part of the campaign, the foundation will send out mailers, put banners up in downtown Hollister and launch a website - givesanbenito.org - that will be a vehicle for nonprofits to use for their campaigns.

The site, which isn't scheduled to go live until June 1, will include an alphabetized list of more than 100 nonprofit agencies that are either based in or benefit the county. Visitors to the site will be able to select a particular agency or an area of interest and donate through a secure server.

"We've been working on this for about eight months," Hicks said. "This is very much a local effort. It is run locally, designed locally (by Schipper Design of San Juan Bautista) and operated through the Community Foundation. People will be able to give online or print out a form and send in a check."

Any amount can be donated and every dollar will be forwarded to the designated organization, without fees or dues required.

"We want to inspire philanthropy," Hicks said. "We want to have a central place where anyone can learn about the needs of our community and learn how to give back."

Nonprofits do not have to pay a fee to be a part of Give San Benito

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campaign, though they must be a local organization.

"We will process the gifts and send the organization a check, which is how we do it now," Hicks said. "We are working as a pass-through for the nonprofits."

The website, she said, will feature photos of and stories from people who live here and give here.

"It'll include photos of local residents that are real people and quotes about why they give and why it's important to give back to the community," Hicks said. "We want to bring people together and inspire local giving. We have thousands of people who leave our community every day to work elsewhere, so we want an easy way for those commuters to understand the needs right here where they live."

The Community Foundation began a decade ago with \$183,000 in seed money. It now has more than \$6 million, with endowment funds making up 60 percent of those assets. In the past three years, the foundation has granted more than \$1.2 million to local nonprofit organizations.

In 2010, the foundation gave out more than \$461,000 to 35 nonprofits in San Benito County and this year it plans to grant \$550,000.

The foundation has invited representatives of local nonprofits to a meeting on May 26 at San Juan Oaks to discuss the giving effort.

"We want this to work for all nonprofits, including the smaller ones that don't have a Web presence and could use givesanbenito.org as their online campaign," Hicks said. "We want for them to be fully on board and educated about how this can work for them, because it is a community website."

As part of the promotional effort, banners will be hung downtown with six messages in English and Spanish and a postcard will be mailed countywide.

Organizers will also bill this summer as "the summer of giving."

"We want to really create a movement during the summer of giving, though the banners will be up for over a year," she said. "This effort won't end after the summer. It's an ongoing tool that hopefully will sustain itself."

Asked how the Give San Benito effort compares to the recently rejuvenated United Way of San Benito giving campaign, Hicks said the Community Foundation supports all efforts to generate local philanthropy.

"We want the United Way to succeed," she said, noting that the foundation helped bring the United Way back. "It's very important for us to have an open dialogue about giving opportunities. They're in the very beginning stages yet and their doing their own type of campaigns. We're very open with them. They're our colleagues and we're all in this together."

For more information about the Give San Benito effort, contact the Community Foundation for San Benito County at 630-1924 or visit www.cffsbc.org.



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