

Christmas cheer again funded by Wild Rivers Community Foundation

December 9, 2019



Howonquet Hall in Smith River sparkled with Christmas lights and décor, as representatives from local organizations mingled and munched on desserts handmade through the Brookings-Harbor High School Youth Transition Program.

Cardboard panels lined the back wall, portraying photos of children unwrapping gifts and families feasting on turkey – all made possible with the help of Wild Rivers Community Foundation Holiday Partnership grants.

The foundation awarded grants to 29 service-centered organizations in Del Norte and Curry counties during the holiday partnership ceremony Wednesday. “Because of this partnership, we touched over 7,000 people last year,” said Gina Zottola, the foundation’s executive director. “We are so blessed by your work.”

The Wild Rivers Community Foundation is an affiliate of the Humboldt Area Foundation, and provides resources, funds and support to individuals and organizations in Curry and Del Norte counties.

In 2008, said a foundation official, the organization saw local nonprofits, groups and churches serving the community with free dinners, food banks and gently-used coats - but noticed that funds for them to do so often were scarce.

So, they came up with an idea – what if donors pooled their donations to create a larger fund? The money then could be divvied out to local organizations to assist them with their work during the holiday season.

“That’s really how it came about, was facilitating these resources by creating a collaborative partnership that many people could participate in and have a large impact on their dollars,” Zottola said.

Twelve years later, the foundation raised \$22,000 to disperse among 29 organizations. The grants varied from \$200 to \$1,500, depending on the need of the organization.

“It just reflects the power of ... pooling our resources and working together,” said Crescent City Mayor Blake Inscore, also the pastor of First Baptist Church. “That’s the love of community, when we all try to make a difference.”

When the holiday partnership initially was formed, the foundation gathered funds from some five donors. This year, 11 donors participated, including Pacific Power, the John G. Atkins Foundation and the St. Joseph’s Health System in Humboldt.

“We start from scratch every year. All the money is based on the charity of those organizations,” said Scott Graves, the Wild Rivers Community Foundation’s strategic communications manager.