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OUR VIEW



BILL ROTH / Daily News archive 2008

Food Bank of Alaska was the top recipient of donations from the Permanent Fund dividend charity check-off.

A slice of dividend

First year of PFD check-off for charities off to good start

The recession was in full swing when it came time to sign up for Permanent Fund dividends in January, February and March.

But still about 5,100 Alaskans took the opportunity to share an average of about \$100 of their fall dividends with charities.

The Legislature passed a law in 2008 to allow people to check off a donation of \$25 or more to a charity of their choice when they file online for dividends.

More than 300 nonprofit organizations signed up to receive the money.

The total donated is roughly \$500,000, according to the Rasmuson Foundation. Final numbers won't be available until later this month.

Congratulations to the 5,100 donors, and to the organizations that made the charity donation possible — foremost among them, the Rasmuson Foundation, which is picking up costs of administering the program for three years, and United Way, which is vetting charities and handling the money. BP Alaska, ConocoPhillips

Alaska, the Mat-Su Health Foundation, the Foraker Group and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority also contributed.

"We're very pleased with the results," said Cassandra Stolzer, spokeswoman for the Rasmuson Foundation. Since the economy suffered this year, and the Permanent Fund itself took a big hit in investment income, nobody

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knew how many people would respond, she said.

In their choices, people contributed the most to organizations that help residents meet basic needs such as food and shelter, said Stolzer. Food Bank of Alaska was the top recipient. The checks will go out to the charitable groups beginning Oct. 26, she said.

The Legislature set it up so the program will end after three years, unless lawmakers vote to keep it.

So at least for the next couple of years, Alaskans have a great opportunity to share the gift we get just for living here. We hope it becomes an annual tradition.

BOTTOM LINE: The charity check-off makes it easy to do the right thing and share some of your dividend.