

PFD cash is a boon to Alaska charities

NICE SURPRISE: "Pick. Click. Give." program gives unexpected boost.

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While many non-profits in Alaska and around the nation are struggling due to a decline in corporate giving, some Alaska organizations this week are receiving an unexpected windfall.

Ordinary Alaskans pledged a total of \$550,000 — deducted from their Permanent Fund dividend payments this fall — to hundreds of charities around the state.

This was the first year of the PFD-charity program, which was publicized in a statewide campaign dubbed "Pick. Click. Give."

The non-profits began learning how much people donated to them from their dividend payments late last week. The money is now in the mail.

"It's a nice surprise," said Marleah LaBelle, spokeswoman for the Food Bank of Alaska.

Her organization netted the biggest haul among the roughly 330 non-profits that applied and were deemed eligible for the PFD donations this year. It is receiving nearly \$29,000.

That could allow the food bank to buy 2,800 more turkeys for needy families during the holiday season, she said. The food bank had already budgeted more money for more turkeys this year due to concerns about an increase in economic hardship among Alaska families.

Another big recipient from PFD donations was public broadcast-

PFD CHARITY: Richest groups cut back most

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ing. Alaska Public Telecommunications Inc., which airs daily statewide radio broadcasts and runs public radio and TV stations in Anchorage, hauled in \$19,155.

Yet another was Alaska Dog and Puppy Rescue, a Mat-Su charity that received \$15,755. The charity had never solicited individual donations before, according to organizers of Pick. Click. Give.

No charity had the foggiest idea how much it would receive through PFD giving, the organizers said.

And given that the donations are unrestricted — the donors can't require the non-profits to use the money for a specific purpose as occurs with many non-profit grants — "it's manna from heaven," said Jordan Marshall, spokesman for the Rasmuson Foundation.

His foundation is a big institutional donor in Anchorage that pushed for the legislation that enabled the donations and also funded the campaign. Many other organizations joined the campaign, including the United Way, which is cutting the checks to the non-profits.

Despite the windfall, it's been a somewhat grim year for many Alaska non-profits.

Ones that depended mainly on a single revenue stream or were already facing declining donations before the global recession are getting pushed close to the edge, said Dennis McMillian, president of the Foraker Group, a business that works with and advises non-profits in Alaska.

"There isn't widespread devastation, but definitely a pulling-back and reconsideration of priorities," said McMillian, who noted that some Alaska non-profits have begun to discuss merging to become more cost-efficient.

Several major organizations in Alaska — oil company Conoco Phillips and Rasmuson, for example — announced big cutbacks in giving this year.

McMillian said he didn't have statistics on a decline in charitable giving in Alaska, but the national decline seen last year — about 2 percent — has been linked mainly to cutbacks from wealthy individuals and organizations rather than individual donors.

"Organizations and individuals with the most money cut back the most," he said.

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