

# Telefunds aim to maintain alumni relations

By Sarah Kitchen

Of the Emerald

Raising money, maintaining relationships with alumni and teaching students communications skills are three of the objectives behind the telefund money-raising campaign at the University, said organizers and students who have worked in the program.

The effectiveness of the telefund campaign has increased every year since the program's inception during the annual Fund Fair four years ago, said Joe Farmer, the annual fund director for the University Foundation.

"We decided that since we did so well with the annual fund, we would try and involve other schools on campus with telefunding," Farmer said.

Farmer explained that the University started the telefunds to bring a more personalized form of raising money to alumni and parents. The school has previously contacted alumni through direct mail.

"Personal solicitation is by far the best form of solicitation," Farmer said. "A telefund allows that direct contact, which is important when asking for support."

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— Ricky Lee Smithrud

One-third of the University's income is in the form of federal grants and gifts, including alumni donations. Another third comes from tuition, and the remaining funds are received from the state.

"If alumni weren't helping to support the college they went to, there couldn't be so many programs offered," said Farmer, who believes people should be aware of how much money needs to be raised through the telefunds.

Ricky Lee Smithrud, assistant director of the annual fund, runs the telefunds for the individual schools, colleges and departments on campus.

Smithrud believes that a student working at a telefund is doing more than just helping to raise money for their school. They are gaining communications skills and getting insights into their field of interest, he said.

"When a student from one department calls alumni who are in the real world, they often get to talk about careers and what it is like in that certain profession," Smithrud said.

Student callers are generally paid minimum wage for their work, although sometimes students from certain departments may volunteer their time to raise money for their programs.

Smithrud said by paying a student, he is assured that all 30 phones in the calling center in Willcox dorm will be covered.

"The students, in return, earn some extra money, and at the same time they are learning about how to communicate better, how to listen better, and how to get a person to stick to a decision," Smithrud said.

Smithrud said he has heard many positive reactions from students who have worked on telefunds.

"Many students have felt at the end that they can communicate better," Smithrud said. He added that some students have used the skills learned through the telefund for summer jobs in fields in which their telecommunications skills are useful.

Kristin Tucker, a sophomore journalism major, has participated in five telefunds since the beginning of the year. Tucker said one gratification derived from working on a telefund is talking to many different people.

"You can tell if they want to talk," Tucker said. "They'll ask about the weather or about certain people, asking if they are still around."

Tucker said she has talked to some people about their careers in journalism. She has also talked to people who went to the University in the 1920s.

Jane Scheidecker, associate dean of program development for the College of Arts and Sciences, said she believes the telefunds are important to help maintain a friendly rapport with alumni.

"Even some of the people who don't want to give money to the school feel positive about



A University student contacts alumni while working for the telefund program, which has grown steadily since its inception four years ago.

in definite pledges over the first telefund.

"I predict that the amount will increase each year," Bartel said.

Students calling for the College of Education were paid the basic telefund wage of \$3.50 per hour. Bartel explained that by paying the students she can recruit a greater number of skilled people to fill the three-hour shifts than by awaiting volunteers.

"People have to be there on time and stay the whole time. You are an employer and they are employees," Bartel said.

"One thing I tell the students working on the telefund is 'where else can you get paid to have fun on your job?'" she said.

The School of Architecture and Allied Arts held its third telefund in January and raised \$30,015. Last year, the school raised \$27,908 over the six-night period.

Karen Johnson, research and development coordinator for the school, said the students and faculty volunteered their time to work on the telefund.

"Sometimes a teacher would bring a class to work together on the telefund," Johnson said.

Johnson calls the telefund a friendly program, and she believes the alumni appreciate being kept in touch with the school.

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