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State Charitable Fund Drive will benefit local agencies

The fund-raising program gives University employees donation options that help hard-hit social services

By Chelsea Duncan
News Reporter

With many non-profit and human services agencies suffering under the current economic climate, University faculty and staff have the opportunity to help through the State of Oregon 2003 Employees Charitable Fund Drive.

The fund drive, which starts today for the University and lasts into December, is a way for state employees to donate money to funds, charity federations and their affiliated non-profit agencies. Employees can choose to support many causes statewide, including social and environmental services.

"Basically, if you have a cause, it can be supported by the Charitable Fund Drive," said Jeff Klein, Lane County fund drive coordinator.

Throughout Oregon, state employees raised more than \$1 million last year that went to hundreds of non-profit organizations. The University, which raised \$223,000 from more than 900 employees, was the third-largest contributing institution in Lane County, after PeaceHealth Medical Group and the Weyerhaeuser Company.

"We're hoping to break 1,000 (employees) this year," Klein said. "The more people that participate, the more of a team effort it feels like."

About \$180,000 of the sum raised by the University went to the United Way of Lane County and its affiliates, which include the American Red Cross and the Eugene Family YMCA. Em-

ployees can also donate money to organizations such as Earth Share of Oregon, a coalition of 31 non-profit environmental groups, and Habitat for Humanity of Oregon, which builds homes for low-income families.

Florrie Turconi, executive director of Habitat for Humanity for Springfield and Eugene, said money from the fund drive contributes to the construction of houses for low-income families who are living in inadequate lodging, which is usually run-down apartments.

"It obviously allows us to continue to build," she said, adding that the houses provide stable environments for families.

"There are many reasons to give at the workplace. It's efficient — you can develop a culture of giving within your own department."

Jeff Klein
Lane County fund drive coordinator

Turconi said the fund drive is a good opportunity for University faculty and staff to donate money to local causes.

Employees can donate any amount they wish in different ways, including payroll deductions or by writing a check. Even those who don't give monetarily often contribute their time by helping out with the fund drive, Klein said.

"There are many reasons to give at the workplace," he said. "It's efficient — you can develop a culture of giving within your own department."

He added that last year at the University, about 65 individuals or families donated at least \$1,000 each to the fund drive.

"There are some very generous people at the University," he said.

Mick Westrick, director of technology and user services at the Charles H. Lundquist College of Business, is serving on the campaign cabinet for the fund drive. He said the donations go a long way in the agencies that people choose to help, adding that many people at the University agree Oregon's social services are lacking.

Westrick said he donates to such agencies as FOOD for Lane County and Womenspace and that he understands how much support donations can provide for these agencies because he has volunteered for United Way in the past.

"I really saw first-hand how effective it was," he said.

Other faculty and staff can also see how their donations will help non-profit agencies and the people they serve. Each year, the University sends some staff and faculty members to tour various non-profit agencies around Eugene. On Friday the group visited the First Place Family Center's shelter for homeless and low-income families and the Buckley Detoxification and Sobering Center.

University President Dave Frohnmayer, who took the tour, said that it puts a human face on charitable needs in a compelling and urgent way.

"Until you see the real people and the huge unmet needs, you don't have a sense of urgency for what needs to be done," Frohnmayer said.

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com.

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