

# Nonprofits cut fundraisers despite need

## Economy cools appetite for galas

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San Francisco Business Times

Charity fundraisers are one more casualty of the recession.

The need for donations has never been higher — demand for services is rising while funding cuts threaten many groups. Yet across the Bay Area, nonprofits are deciding that this is no time for philanthropy as usual.

The Taylor Family Foundation in Livermore sends 3,000 chronically ill kids to its 144-bed Camp Arroyo each year, which costs about \$1 million. It raises the bulk of those funds at an August gala held at camp. Last year's was so successful it brought in \$1.5 million, but the foundation canceled this year's event.

"I couldn't fathom going out and asking people to give when I know businesses are hurting... It's not the right thing to do," said Elaine Taylor, co-founder and president of the foundation. "We'd rather be receptive to what's going on out there."

Taylor hopes to raise the \$450,000 she needs for the rest of this year through creative new efforts like coin drives and camper sponsorships. The worry is how to pay for camp in 2010.

Other groups are trying smaller parties as the replacement for an annual gala. "The idea of a big event, whether you get



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things donated or not, the perception is how could you spend money on this in this economy?" said Caroline Pappajohn, associate director at New Door Ventures, a San Francisco youth development organization that decided to replace its annual gala with a series of small, board member hosted gatherings.

Turns out, there's an AIG effect in the nonprofit sector, too. It's a truism that it costs money to raise money, but nonprofits are now scared of being seen spending.

Similarly, Bay Area Jewish Healing Center in San Francisco has sent out invitations to its sixth annual gala, but instead of going to the Four Seasons, this year 'attendees' are

invited to a "Healing at Home" event where they stay in with loved ones in honor of the Healing Center.

"It's a complicated situation because the economy needs stimulation so of course hotels need to employ people," said Rabbi Eric Weiss, executive director of Jewish Healing Center. "In the end, instead of inviting people to a celebratory event, we wanted... people to know that any money they give us, the dollars will go further because we don't have the overhead of an event."

In addition to saving money on the party, going small "helps to forge a strong sense of who we are and connection to the work we are doing. That will get people more

engaged," Pappajohn said. All of these groups hope to net the same amount. The key to raising money in this economy is making people feel connected to the work a charity does, they believe.

For that reason, some groups are actually adding new events.

Boys & Girls Club of San Francisco will add two new events in 2009. The first, a Youth of the Year luncheon in January, attracted 170, more than the 120 expected.

President Rob Connolly did assure attendees that the hotel had donated the room, and events are smaller, but they remain vital, he said.

"We're finding it really important to be out in front of our donors, showing them exactly what the Boys & Girls Club is accomplishing," Connolly said. "We're not setting extraordinary goals with these fundraisers, but we want to show that we have new ideas to support."

In late fall, the Club will hold a luncheon celebrating the opening of Alice Waters' third Edible Schoolyard.

Other larger organizations are similarly staying the course — a choice that all say has paid off, and a good thing, since fundraisers are critical to fund programs.

A.C.T. has its annual gala April 19, and so far, ticket sales are ahead of last year. The Opera is moving ahead with its events, and Berkeley Rep is going all out for its 17th and final Narsai Toast fundraiser, which has raised \$4.3 million over the years.

Despite the economy, tickets start at \$600 and tables can go for up to \$25,000.

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