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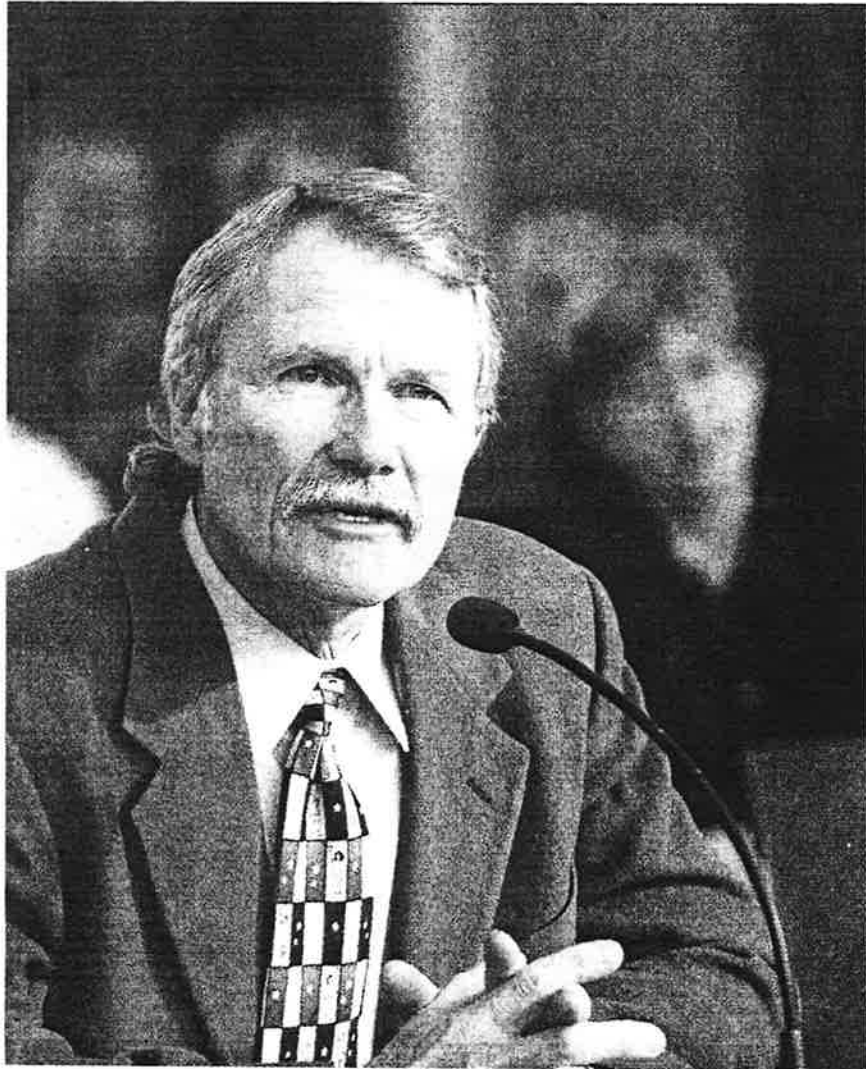


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Local charities see donations downturn

By BILL CHIDESTER
Of the Argus

The economic recession has begun to hit charitable organizations in western Washington County, some with full impact, others less so. But agency leaders agree, they're walking on financial eggs fearing a backbreaking drop in donations.

As many as 30 local charitable groups, ranging from the Community Action Organization to the Washington County Habitat for Humanity, depend on charitable giving to supplement grants and government funds. Executive directors say that while government funding remains stable, at least for this year, corporate and individual giving already have declined and may slide even more over the next several months.

At SOLV, based in Hillsboro, the situation is grave. "This is the toughest financially for us in 11 years," said Executive Director Jack McGowan.

SOLV, which works statewide to organize community enhancement projects, has cut 25 percent of its budget and kept five people off its payrolls "and we're still facing a shortfall of \$100,000," said McGowan.

"We've been hit with a one-two punch—the economic slump which we began to feel last spring and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. I put together a cost-savings plan, cutting \$216,000 in the first quarter and cutting another \$96,000 in the third quarter. Those are significant reductions in an annual budget of about \$1.7 million. We've cut staff and services and yet the demand

for our services is at an all-time high," said McGowan.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, people gave selflessly to aid victims in New York and Washington. "We support that effort wholeheartedly, but it has reduced donations to local charities," said McGowan.

Compounding SOLV's problem is its reliance on non-government funding. SOLV receives money from corporations, individuals, Friends of SOLV and, to a very limited degree, from local communities. But unlike many service agencies, it has no earned income—money from tuitions, admissions or service compensation. "We receive nothing through the door," said McGowan.

At the Community Action

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Recession, attacks slow gifts

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Organization, Executive Director Jerralynn Ness said the full impact of the recession and recent events have yet to be felt, but there is concern.

"On the one hand there was a huge outpouring of support for victims in New York. Maybe those donations (estimated to be \$1 billion at this point) reflect a whole new change in attitude in our capacity to help others. I think people want to make a difference by giving to others," she said.

On the other hand, she fears the economic slump may dry up several key sources of funding. As the stock market remains in the doldrums, people may not have much in the way of stock options to donate.

Foundations, which sustain their treasuries from investment earnings, may have less to give away. Corporations, seeing their profits plummet, will likely cut back charitable giving. And individuals may be afraid to surrender their discretionary income.

Ness said she will have a better picture after the CAO annual fund-raising breakfast Nov. 14 and its holiday campaign. "Our high time for campaign giving comes in November and December.

Meanwhile, as more breadwinners lose their jobs and families turn to CAO and other charitable agencies, the demand for services is expected to soar.

Agencies that depend on contractual government funding and grants are more confident in their future

resources and also are concerned they can come up with required matching funds.

C.B. Wright, development director of the Edwards Centers in Aloha and Hillsboro, said the agency must match a Washington County Block Grant to finance expansion of the Hillsboro Center, a facility for developmentally challenged adults. She estimates the agency must collect \$65,000 in private donations for the \$465,000 project.

The Westside YMCA Family Resource Center in Forest Grove, which provides basic services and parenting assistance to needy families, faces a similar challenge, said program director Martha Ochoa. To improve their chances to raise a necessary \$20,000 for 2002-2003, center directors have moved the center's funding campaign from November to February. "We didn't want to compete with other campaigns in November," said Ochoa.

To find private funding for the Washington County Interfaith Hospitality Network, Executive Director Betsy Hanson said she expects "to pound the pavement" this fall and winter. "I know we need more money and I'm concerned whether it will be there." While the network works closely with local churches, it uses private and government funds to operate a shelter in southeast Hillsboro.

Other agencies contacted were more confident that local donations would continue.

Catherine Crooker, director of the Tuality Healthcare

Foundation, said contributions have not slowed for the hospital's Cancer Center capital campaign.

"The campaign is going well. We're at 66 percent of our goal. For major projects at home, I don't think there has been a drop off in corporate and individual giving. But, nationally, fewer people are turning out for fund-raising events. Ticket sales for our annual ¡Salud! wine auction on Nov. 10 and 11 are slower than usual. The event raises funds for vineyard workers' families.

Bill Bash, a leader in the Western Washington County Habitat for Humanity, said the organization raised \$9,000 from a golf tournament and other fund-raising events in September. "That's about average, and we're financially where we need to be," he said.

Habitat for Humanity, which relies on donated labor and building supplies, recently finished one home in Cornelius, has another three-fourths finished and has purchased a Forest Grove site for a third.

"We'll send (direct mail) invitations to our 125 members in November. I'm hopeful we'll get a good response," said Bash.

Sabrino Sardineta, executive director at Centro Cultural, felt confident general support for the Cornelius community center would continue. "Yes, families are more careful with their money, but our donors are very faithful. I think our November fund-raising event will be good."

bridge road ranks 53rd.

Four separate repair projects on bridges over the west and east forks of Dairy Creek on Highway 47 are on the state bridge list for HB 2142 funds. The bridge over McKay Creek on Highway 47, Highway 47 at Vadis and Davies, Wolf Creek and the Nehalem River and Southwest 72nd Avenue over Highway 44 are also on the state bridge list. Projects are ranked by factors including bridge conditions, load types and capacity.

Paving projects such as Highways 8 and 47 through Forest Grove are important as well, said Kitzhaber. During a tour of city roads last spring, the Forest Grove City Council found those highways were among those in the poorest condition in town.

"The first priority we have is to preserve pavement and our system," said Kitzhaber. "Taking care of resources we have is pretty important."

In addition to speeding up the allocation of transportation project funds, the state also needs to promote tourism, especially from Canada and those in nearby states, he added.

"Tourism is one of the few industries where we get a return over and over. We need to consolidate our efforts and take advantage of federal economic stimulation packages to stimulate Oregon's economy in the short-term."

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