How volunteers and community donations meet a student need

T
his has been a very trying time for residents and non-profits in the Tri-Valley. The Assistance League of Amador Valley has been and is committed to addressing the unique needs and challenges in our communities. Their mission is to “transform lives and strengthen our community.”

As a non-profit, the philanthropic projects of the Assistance League are locally designed and carried out by volunteers, so that the funds, which are generously supplied by the community, benefit children and seniors in the Tri-Valley. The volunteers spend an average of 9,000 hours annually in making their contributions to local citizens.

In the past, the Assistance League has supported the program Operation School Bell® – Clothing the Children, where they spend up to $150 for each school-aged child to purchase new school clothes. Volunteers have traditionally guided each child, one-on-one, to select their own clothes. The program has been incredibly satisfying for the children, their parents, and the volunteers.

In March of this year, Assistance League volunteers recognized a “new normal,” which caused them to pivot in a new direction for Operation School Bell without forsaking their mission. The pandemic has offered not only challenges but opportunities. Because they have dedicated funds for Operation School Bell, they surveyed the schools and discovered that students needed headsets with microphones for online distance learning. These headsets are comfortable and have good sound quality. Using them, children are able to focus, without distraction, on their learning and school work. We expect that the 400 headsets purchased from fund-raisers and donations will improve the children’s virtual learning experiences with their teachers.

Assistance League has always appreciated its strong connection with the local schools, and has received excellent support from the Amador Valley communities. That support is doubly appreciated during these challenging times for the Operation School Bell program. “We want our children to get the best education possible, and we thank our supporters for enabling us to make a significant contribution to our schools and children,” said Roz Wright of the Assistance League of Amador Valley.

Business Spotlight

The future of finance is local

SMBX is a small business bond marketplace that simplifies financing for small to medium sized businesses while empowering people to support their favorite community businesses. SMBX creates the ability to invest locally through small business bonds, rather than equity. This enables small businesses to bypass traditional lending institutions and work directly with people in their communities who want to invest locally, while retaining more control over how their money is invested.

“Our innovative vision of business investment allows people to show their financial support for their favorite local establishments by investing in their success in real time,” said SMBX CEO and co-founder Benjamin Lozano. “This is even more important today, as the current financial climate is creating investment turmoil.”

SMBX is actively changing the way small businesses think about finances, and how people think about investing. This gives investors the opportunity to empower local businesses, while the community becomes fiscally stronger.

As a team of recovering bankers, financial engineers, and technologists, SMBX is working around the clock to democratize small business finance and build a dynamic small business marketplace network that unlocks wealth for business owners and the communities that invest in them.

In 2016, the SEC enacted Title III of the JOBS Act, making it easier for people to invest in start-ups and small businesses. The founding team saw an opportunity to utilize this new legal space to build a new small business capital marketplace and manifest their vision. SMBX was founded in 2016 in San Francisco, CA by co-founders Benjamin Lozano (CEO), Jackie Chan (COO), and Bhavish Ballalhota (CTO).

“We just finished working with Pleasanton’s own Uji Time - an ice cream shop located in the Pacific Pearl Shopping Center near the outlets,” said Ben Stein of SMBX. “When the pandemic hit, they knew they wouldn’t be able to deliver soft serve ice cream, so they went to their local community to raise $85k to develop a hard ice cream product. The community came through raising $87k and will receive their first payment back in November,” said Stein.

SMBX believes small business investing should be something available to everyone. To learn more about this vision, contact Ben Stein at benjaminstein@thesmbx.com or by phone at 773-320-9142.