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Press Release

Petaluma Educational Foundation's Alphabet Soup Thrift Store Makes Record Sales for City-Wide School Program Funding

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Petaluma, CA: Record breaking volumes of used furniture donations at Petaluma's Alphabet Soup benefit Thrift Store are reaping much-needed additional revenue for cash-strapped city wide schools.

In the midst of unprecedented State wide educational cuts, Petaluma Educational Foundation's boutique thrift store on Western Avenue is making significant increases in positive impact on program funding.

"February turned out to be a stellar month for Alphabet Soup," said store manager, Mary Shaw. With 100% of the store's profits going to Petaluma Educational Foundation coffers, several more pre-approved major impact educational grant programs will likely join the ranks of 11 innovative school programs already awarded by PEF this year.

According to Janet Ramatici, Executive Director of PEF, Alphabet Soup Store posted net profits of \$20,149 for the first six months of the foundation's fiscal year. *"We had budgeted \$26,883 for the whole year based on previous years,"* said Ramatici.

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Shaw credits a robust flow of furniture donations and sales for this significant increase in educational foundation revenue. *"A sofa selling for \$165 equals 41 pieces of \$4 clothing,"* said Shaw, though she was quick to note that clothing sales are the bread and butter of the downtown boutique thrift store. Special promotions of 20% off the entire store every second Saturday and 50% off every last Saturday of the month have drawn considerable custom from credit-crunched shoppers looking for extreme bargains.

A 2010 Alphabet Soup Spring-Clean challenge further invites Petaluma school supporters to step-up donations of reusable household items, furniture and clothing in record numbers this March and April.

By donating large, gently-used items of furniture, community-minded individuals can make a significant impact on funding Petaluma school programs in vital areas such as health and nutrition, science and technology, teaching gardens, language arts and math: see www.pefinfo.com

Dollar amount of grant requests for the coming year are double those requested last year as schools rely more heavily on PEF to save programs that are in jeopardy or to fund innovations that would otherwise be an absolute impossibility in today's economic climate.

Responding to critical and urgent need, PEF introduced Major Impact Grants for up to \$15,000 following months of strategic planning in the midst of unprecedented state wide cuts. Thirteen Major Impact Grants (now totaling \$131,781) are now able to immediately implement programs to be completed in Petaluma schools by May 2011. Newest funding partner, Community Health Foundation of Greater Petaluma has committed \$5,000 to a Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) leadership program at Casa Grande High School to prepare students for careers in the health care industry.

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In addition to funding Major Impact Grants, dozens of **Fund the Future** educational enrichment grants of up to \$2,000 each *were also awarded to city-wide schools by PEF this Spring.*

Ramatici and Co-Chairs of PEF Fundraising, Carol Libarle and Cathy Bachman urged the community to: *“Help us sustain and increase this ambitious new PEF Major Impact Educational Grant Program at a time when our children need it most.”*

Individual donors, family-partners, corporate and business supporters within the community are proving to be a lifeline for maintaining and improving Petaluma’s innovative education programs: *“the benefits of donating to Fund the Future go beyond the joy of giving to a particular school as a pledge to PEF ensures a city-wide commitment to excellence in education both now and in the future,” says Libarle.*

Donors of \$5,000 or more may select a specific program and/or school. All 37 public, non-profit private and charter k-12 schools in the Petaluma area are eligible to apply for PEF Grants each fall. A volunteer committee objectively reviews applications and major impact applicants are selectively invited to present their program in person.

After each grant recipient completes a thorough program evaluation, PEF funds grants with proof of purchase.

“100% of every dollar donated to the Fund the Future program at PEF will fund grants,” says Ramatici. “Best of all for business and corporate donors, at any level they may direct their donation to focus areas including, athletics and nutrition, fine arts and music, humanities, literacy and ELL, math and science, technology, vocational/life skills.”

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In addition to its **Fund the Future** grant program, Petaluma Educational Foundation funds over 200 graduating high school student scholarships each Spring, plus cultural enrichment events in art and music. PEF also manages over \$3, 500, 000 in endowment and component funds established through gifts, planned giving and corporate commitments to benefit Petaluma schools.

For more information on pledging to the **Fund the Future** Program call 707 778 4632. Petaluma Educational Foundation is located at 200 Douglas Street, Petaluma, CA 94952. Pledges may also be made online at www.pefinfo.com.

To arrange for collection of a large item of furniture donation to Alphabet Soup, call the store at 707 776 4620 or email: alphabetsoup@pefinfo.com.

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