

Frances Rivetti

Freelance Writing and Public Relations 707 477 8397 francesrivetti@comcast.net

Press Release

*Petaluma Community, Business Owners and Corporate Donors Are Urged To
'Fund the Future' by Pledging End-of-Year Financial Support For Vital, City-Wide
Educational Grants*

**Petaluma Educational Foundation Steps up Campaign to Match Focus Funding
Areas with Corporate/Business Philosophy and Innovative Educational Programs**

For immediate release: November 24, 2009

Petaluma, CA: Petaluma Educational Foundation has raised almost \$100,000 towards funding of next year's annual **Fund the Future** classroom grant program – thanks in large part to a highly successful BASH fundraising gala in September.

Yet with on-going, historic budget deficits continuing to slash resources in each and every city classroom, an unprecedented \$423,000 in record-breaking new grant requests has been received by the Petaluma-based foundation this winter alone, highlighting the escalating role of a fast-growing, privately-funded philanthropic, educational institution within the community.

With only a few short weeks until groundbreaking educational programs seeking funding are due to commence, the city's business community, individuals and corporate supporters of education in Petaluma are being asked to step up to the plate with financial holiday donations to at least double the amount that has already been earmarked for the grant funding program.

“Increased financial support from businesses, corporations and individual donors will allow PEF to continue to fund these innovative and enlightened classroom programs and foster dynamic educational partnerships,” says Executive Director of Petaluma Educational Foundation, Janet Ramatici. *“Matching corporate and business donors with key grants focused in their area of corporate and business philosophy is a primary initiative this year as Major Impact Grant finalists are poised to influence powerful new educational trends here in Petaluma.”*

One such trend to emerge is the need to fast forward from century-old, front of class teaching methods: *“Students no longer learn about flowers by reading about their parts in the science book, instead they will see a flower bloom through time-lapse photography... in seconds on a 10-foot wide video screen,”* says Jeff Williamson, Principal, McDowell Elementary School.

In addition to funding dozens of **Fund the Future** educational enrichment grants of up to \$2,000 each, BASH Co-Chair on the PEF Board of Directors, Cathy Bachman urges the community to: *“Help us to launch and sustain Petaluma’s ambitious new Major Impact Educational Grant Program, funding outstanding grant application finalists with a maximum of \$15,000 per program at a time when our children need it most.”*

Major Impact Grants for vocational training in Petaluma’s high schools are set to hone student skills for jobs within the community in the fields of Agricultural Heritage, Hi Tech, Film and Media *“The use of technology greatly increases students’ employment and educational opportunities,”* says Dan Sunia, Teacher, Petaluma High School.

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.

Ramatici, Bachman and Co-Chair of PEF Fundraising, Carol Libarle are stepping up the campaign in urging new donors and long-time supporters to give generously this holiday season: *“the benefits of donating to Fund the Future go beyond the joy of giving and 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. The educational foundation is hoping to obtain sufficient tax-deductible holiday gift donations to fund multiple, city-wide programs next Spring, with monthly payment options available, for a completion of a total donated dollar pledge by May 15th, 2010.

One grant application currently awaiting funding in the Old Adobe School District is for interactive Smart Boards, 3D projectors and 10 foot screens for multimedia project presentations. *“Students no longer learn about flowers by reading about their parts in a science book,”* says Jeff Williamson, Principal of Old Adobe Elementary School. *“Instead they will see a flower bloom through time-lapse photography ... in seconds on a 10 foot wide video screen.”*

All 37 public, non-profit private and charter k-12 schools in the Petaluma area are eligible to apply for PEF Grants. A volunteer committee objectively reviews applications and major impact applicants are selectively invited to present their program in person.

“Visuals provided by a PEF grant will help our ELL students ‘access real-world, multi-dimensional images to construct meaning and build vocabulary,” says grant applicant Maureen Rudder, Principal of McDowell Elementary School.

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.”

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.

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*Petaluma Educational Foundation, 200 Douglas Street, Petaluma, Ca 94952
PEF Director, Janet Ramatici 707 778 4632 janet@pefinfo.com*