



NEWS RELEASE

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Oakland Small Schools Foundation promises 5-1 return on gifts to help students in small schools in city's poorest neighborhoods

OAKLAND, Calif. – (4/29/08) A non-profit foundation that provides management assistance and has raised more than \$4 million in recent years for schools in Oakland's poorest flatland neighborhoods is for the first time turning to the community in general for contributions to continue its work.

The Oakland Small Schools Foundation (OSSF) confidently promises that every \$1 donated during this fund drive will be turned into \$5 for the schools, after the organization puts its grant writers to work. OSSF Executive Director Holly Babe Faust said this pledge is based simply on the foundation's record of past success raising money for specific programs from educational and philanthropic foundations.

While the foundation's record raising money for specific programs is robust, it has never before asked the community for money to support itself.

Letters to a list of potential donors are being mailed this week, and an appeal has gone up on the OSSF Web site, www.smallschoolsfoundation.org. There are also Web pages linked there from every one of Oakland's 47 "small schools" – those for which OSSF has tailored its services. These Web pages are part of the marketing support that OSSF provides to its client schools.

The Oakland Unified School District has created 47 "small schools," breaking up older, larger ones, as part of the school reform movement begun in 1998. A few of the schools are now six or seven years old, and some of these have shown the highest growth in student achievement in the district. Many more just started in the last few years.

"Each school has between 150 and 500 students," Faust explained. "Each school is distinctive and focused on a particular educational theme and led by an entrepreneurial principal. They are personal, with the goal of having each student known well by faculty and staff."

(more)

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“These schools face special challenges that others in the Oakland district do not. About 65 percent of small schools’ students come from low-income families. A large percentage of their parents have not finished high school. In many of these schools, 90 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunches. Sixty-five percent are English-language learners,” she said.

“All schools today depend on raising money beyond that provided by government,” Faust noted. “Some parent organizations at Oakland’s more affluent schools raise as much as \$600,000 per year to support the programs and teachers that they know they need in their schools. But in these small schools, parents simply don’t have the same resources. And their children come to school needing more help.”

OSSF helps schools that choose to contract for its services “with donor campaigns and fundraising events, marketing materials, and finance management. We keep their accounts, pay their bills, and employ program managers at their school sites. In addition to financial resources, OSSF helps the schools become very efficient operationally. We wrote 40 grants for schools this year.”

“OSSF has raised \$2 million in private money for schools and another \$1.5 million in government funds since 2004 for the things they need, like tutors, classroom supplies, after-school programs, family resources, and counselors. The foundation’s goal is to raise an average of \$100,000 annually per small school beyond their traditional public funding by 2011. OSSF has more than doubled revenues each year for the last three. In 2005, OSSF had one staff person; today it has six,” Faust said.

The foundation’s goal for the current fund drive is to raise \$50,000 “to supplement our other income and support another Project Manager position to sustain the demand for the work with the schools,” Faust said.

OSSF is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible.

About Oakland Small Schools Foundation

Oakland Small Schools Foundation (OSSF) is dedicated to promoting excellence in Oakland's public schools so that all our students have the opportunity to achieve. OSSF is the only organization focused on securing and providing expert operational and fundraising services for those Oakland small schools that serve primarily low-income students.

OSSF was founded in 2003 by a local group of business and school leaders as a vehicle for raising funds for school programs. Since then, OSSF has developed capacity building, marketing, and administrative services for new small schools to support their dramatic growth, essential needs, and many ambitious programs.