

Fresno-area nonprofits kick off day of giving

By BoNhia Lee, Robert Rodriguez and Tim Sheehan



Boxes are set up waiting for toys to be delivered to the Toys for Tots drop-off point at River Park in Fresno last Christmas season. Valley groups are asking residents to remember to give to local charities this holiday season. CRAIG KOHLRUSS/THE FRESNO BEE

CRAIG KOHLRUSS — Fresno Bee Staff Photo [Buy Photo](#)

- Tips for donating wisely
 - Volunteer with a local charity. This provides first-hand knowledge about programs that benefit the community.
 - Charities in California have to register with the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts. You can review the charity's purpose and financial records at www.oag.ca.gov/charities.
 - If you are contacted by a solicitor on behalf of a charity, ask if he or she works for a commercial fundraiser and what percentage of donations goes directly to the charity. You may prefer to contact the charity directly.
 - If you receive an email or text message asking for a donation, contact the charity directly and confirm that the request is legitimate.
 - Make donations directly on a charity's website. If donating by check, use the full name of the charity instead of initials or an abbreviation. Do not give your credit card number to a telephone solicitor.
 - Never give your Social Security number or other personal information to a charitable solicitation. Never give out credit card information to an unfamiliar organization. Look at the charity's privacy policy and learn who the charity might share your information with before you provide it.

Source: California Attorney General Kamala D. Harris

The holiday shopping season started with Black Friday and rolled into Cyber Monday. Then, there was Giving Tuesday — the kickoff to a season of charitable giving.

The international movement, now in its third year, uses social media to raise awareness and money to help nonprofit organizations with their year-round work.

In Fresno, several groups jumped on Twitter and Facebook to encourage people to donate to their causes.

The San Joaquin River Parkway & Conservation Trust posted online and sent emails asking supporters for donations. The money would help “create the 22-mile parkway for everyone, and will help us create opportunities for people to get outside and enjoy the San Joaquin River,” the email said.

“We think it's very important for people to realize there are many nonprofits doing great work in the community and the holiday is a great time for members of the community to give a little support,” said Sarah Parkes, the parkway's program director.

Tuesday afternoon was still a little early to know whether the campaign was successful in getting donations, but “we've had a lot of responses as far as people opening emails,” Parkes said. “We are making an impact on getting the word out about this cool day that celebrates giving.”

The Poverello House posted pictures on Twitter of people holding signs about why they give to charity and shared a message that said, “71 cents provides one hot meal at Pov.”

Granville Homes got into the holiday spirit with a \$10,000 gift to the Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign. A check presentation was held Tuesday afternoon at the kettle in front of the CVS Pharmacy in Fig Garden Village. The North Fresno Rotary has volunteered at the kettle for 30 years, the Salvation Army said.

The money will help feed the hungry. The Salvation Army expects to feed 20,000 people this month.

Kym Dildine, director of development for the Community Food Bank, said her organization received about \$20,000 last year as part of Giving Tuesday. The Food Bank hopes to do the same, if not better, this year.

“Everyone does Black Friday and Cyber Monday, so donating to your favorite charity or nonprofit is a great way to

round out the year,” Dildine said.

The organization serves a five-county area — Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings and Kern — and provides food for 250,000 to 300,000 people a year.

Dildine said the organization depends heavily on the community’s financial support. She said that a \$1 donation can be leveraged to provide nine meals, while a \$10 donation can feed a family of four for a week.

For those who were unaware of Giving Tuesday, Dildine said the food bank accepts financial donations all year long. The organization also makes it easy to give through its website: www.communityfoodbank.net.

“It is easy for people to shop online these days and we encourage them to come on over to our page and donate online as well,” Dildine said.

Giving Tuesday was founded in 2012 by New York’s 92nd Street Y, a community center, in partnership with the United Nations Foundation. The movement has attracted more than 18,000 partners nationwide and thousands more around the world.

This was the first year that Faith in Community, an affiliate of 20 Fresno congregations and organizations, participated in the campaign.

“Over the last several months, we’ve tried to broaden our base of grassroots donors,” said Andy Levine, executive director. “We’ve got financial support from foundations and other institutions, but we try to have our funding base from grassroots people to build power for social justice in Fresno.”

The network, which is working on improving racial inequality and bringing attention to hundreds of boarded-up, abandoned properties in south Fresno, doesn’t have a specific monetary goal to meet. Donations as little as \$5, which can be made through <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/fic>, will help pay staff salaries, bring on new organizers and pay for leadership training, Levine said.

The United Way of Fresno County is also a newcomer to Giving Tuesday. The relatively modest effort included changing the cover photo on its Facebook page to a banner with the #unselfie and #GivingTuesday social-media hashtags and a reminder to visitors that “Black Friday and Cyber Monday are days to ‘get,’” while Giving Tuesday was a day to give back.

“We’re not trying to be overly aggressive, but we just want to let people know we’re doing great things in the community,” said Robert DeLaRosa, the United Way’s marketing communication specialist. “This is our first time dipping our toe in the water, but if it’s worthwhile, we’ll give it a shot.”

The United Way directs contributions to more than 80 local nonprofit partners and coordinates programs to promote financial literacy, education, health services and emergency food and shelter.

Perhaps its most visible effort is Toys for Tots, a project with the U.S. Marine Corps that last year collected and distributed about 85,000 toys to children for Christmas. This year, the goal is 90,000 toys. DeLaRosa said Giving Tuesday got off to a good start when Johanson Transportation Service of Fresno donated \$10,000 to the United Way for the Toys for Tots effort.

Individuals can donate through the organization’s website: <http://www.unitedwayfresno.org/>.

Sue Smilie-Janecek, board chairwoman for the United Way of Fresno County, said the economy remains difficult for nonprofits and charities in the area as the central San Joaquin Valley continues to emerge from the economic recession.

“We’re getting more new people involved in the board and our projects than in the past, and that’s encouraging,” she

said. "But it's still a struggle to get people to give. Fresno, as big as it is, is not as philanthropic as you'd hope, so it's a struggle for nonprofits to maintain and even harder for them to grow."

Contact the reporters at blee@fresnobee.com, brodriguez@fresnobee.com, tsheehan@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6330.

Copyright

© 2014 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>