COMMUNITY, GENERAL

Giving event sustains nonprofits

by Rudy Herndon Moab Sun News
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Students displayed artwork depicting their stay at the Canyonlands Field Institute’s Professor Valley Field Camp. Donors can help the institute and other local nonprofits carry out their missions by donating online to Love Utah Give Utah on Thursday, March 31. [Moab Sun News file photo]

For Moab’s nonprofit community, Thursday, March 31, is like Christmas all over again.
The Community Foundation of Utah will be holding its online Love Utah Give Utah fundraiser for 24 hours that day, giving donors the chance to connect with their favorite nonprofits. Residents can go to the secure website loveutgiveut.razoo.com to show their financial support to the registered nonprofits of their choice.

This year, there are a host of Moab-area nonprofits to choose from, including the Moab Free Health Clinic, Grand Area Mentoring, Canyonlands Field Institute, the Moab Valley Multicultural Center and Christmas Box International. You can find a complete list of Moab-area nonprofits by going to the Love Utah Give Utah website, and entering “Moab” in the search bar at the top of the homepage.

The Love Utah Give Utah website is designed to further the charitable foundation’s goal of promoting philanthropic efforts by engaging first-time donors and younger generations. It also aims to boost the long-term sustainability of Utah-based nonprofits by expanding their donor bases.

In 2015, the foundation’s 24-hour fundraising drive brought in $1.23 million from more than 14,600 donors in 141 communities across the state, including Moab. More than one-third of those donors had never donated online before, and about the same percentage were under the age of 40.

Community Foundation of Utah Innovation Director Tony Mastracci sees the response to date as a sign of growing interest in other efforts to promote online philanthropy, such as Giving Day after Black Friday.

“When we started four years ago, it wasn’t as common, but I suspect that you’ll see more and more of these online giving days,” he said.

Mastracci said that donors can add their monetary gifts to an online bin that is not unlike an Amazon.com shopping cart: Once they’re done “shopping” for groups to support, they can make their donations all at once, instead of going through the process over and over again.
“We try and make it as easy as possible for donors to connect with the nonprofit organizations they like,” he said.

Love Utah Give Utah is one of four major fundraisers that the Moab Valley Multicultural Center will be holding this year, and it keeps the staffers and volunteers there on their toes.

“It’s kind of fast and fun,” Moab Valley Multicultural Center Outreach Coordinator Katlyn Keane said. “It’s a little bit of an adrenaline rush.”

Last year, the multicultural center raised $10,000 in that condensed time frame, with a $5,000 match doubling gifts from smaller donors. Together, that money paid for general operating expenses at the center, which offers everything from interpretive and translating services to cultural education and outreach programs and crisis resources.

Keane is hopeful that the multicultural center will be able to top that amount this year, both in terms of overall donations, and in additional support from the fundraiser’s main organizers: The Community Foundation of Utah awards cash prizes to organizations in a variety of categories that draw in the most individual donors.

Anyone who would like to contribute online won’t have to wait until March 31 to commit their support: Any funds that they pledge between now and then will be counted on the big day next week.

Canyonlands Field Institute Sales Manager Stacy Dezelsky said any donations that come her group’s way benefit the Professor Valley Field Camp and a wide variety of scientific and environmental education programs there. Donors can also help subsidize field trips, thereby allowing local low-income students and Native American kids to participate in outdoor activities that the institute offers throughout the region.

Like Keane, Dezelsky said her group has seen more interest in online giving with each passing year of involvement in Love Utah Give Utah.
“Every year, it’s brought in a little bit more, and brought in more participants,” Dezelsky said. “It’s been really good exposure for us.”

Mastracci emphasizes that every penny in donations will stay in the state, and if donors have any questions about how their money might be spent, they can find detailed descriptions on each group’s Love Utah Give Utah webpage.

“They can be assured that the money they’re giving here stays with nonprofits that provide services in the state of Utah,” he said.

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Love Utah Give Utah fundraiser on March 31 benefits local, statewide NPOs

For more information, go to: loveutgiveut.razoo.com, or visit the Community Foundation of Utah’s Love Utah Give Utah website at: utahcf.org/our-initiatives/love-utah-give-utah.