

# They will survive

Local nonprofits becoming practical and creative during recession

By **DAVE MASON**  
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

**O**uch. Their donations have fallen 10 to 25 percent, their staffs reduced, their office space more cramped to save on rent. They've had to drop costly fundraisers and be more frugal. And governments, foundations and companies are helping them a lot less.

But Santa Barbara nonprofits say they won't give up.

It takes more than the worst recession since the Great Depression to deter these organizations.

Nonprofits told the News-Press they're looking at inexpensive ways of raising funds and saving money, including working with each other. They're also seeking new donors, even those who can only give a little. In at least one case, the "new" methods include a time-tested one — a rummage sale.

Right now, nonprofits emphasized, is the time to be creative.

Collaborations have included:

- A joint sock hop benefiting the Central Coast chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and LifeChronicles, a nonprofit that videotapes messages from the terminally ill and the elderly for their families. "(The dance) allowed for an effective use of resources," said Rhonda Spiegel, the Alzheimer's chapter's executive director.

But Kate Carter, founder and executive director of LifeChronicles, said that while it was a great idea, the event didn't raise as much money as hoped. "That's just the economy."

- Opera Santa Barbara working with Fresno Grand Opera to stage Verdi's "Macbeth." The same cast will perform the opera on different dates during the 2009-10 season in Santa Barbara and Fresno, as well as Orange County.

The production is financed jointly by the two opera companies.

"It's a huge cost savings," said Steven Sharpe, general director



SANTA BARBARA  
NEWS-PRESS

SECTION **D**  
life@newspress.com

**Life** SUNDAY



AUGUST 30, 2009

Nonprofit agencies rent space at below market price at the new Arts and Culture Center in Santa Barbara. Clockwise from left are Tim Schwartz of the Santa Barbara Education Foundation; Anna Le Pley of the Santa Barbara Choral Society; Trixie Geyer of the Patricia Henley Foundation; Pam Taylor of the Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra; Brian Hotchkin of Opera Santa Barbara; and Julie McLeod of Santa Barbara Dance Alliance. Mr. Schwartz, Ms. Geyer and Ms. Taylor are standing next to their respective offices. Ms. Le Pley and Mr. Hotchkin, whose offices are elsewhere on the floor, are standing next to currently unoccupied offices. Ms. McLeod, whose office also is nearby, is standing next to a conference room that the nonprofits share.

of Opera Santa Barbara about pooling resources.

- Several arts nonprofits working next to each other in offices in the new Arts and Culture Center on State Street, where a collaboration could be as

easy as a walk down the hall.

"It allows for spontaneous, collaborative conversations," said Tim Schwartz, executive director of the Santa Barbara Education Foundation. He said he can talk to other nonprofits such as the

Santa Barbara Symphony, also housed in the building, about bringing musicians into schools.

That's just one of the perks. Perhaps a bigger one — especially in today's economy — is the center, one

of 14 buildings that the Hutton Foundation owns, charging one-third of the market value for rent, according to Tom Parker, president of the foundation. And

Please see **NONPROFITS** on D11

# Survival means less space, more partnering



COURTESY PHOTO

The Alzheimer's Association and LifeChronicles saved on fundraising expenses by staging a sock hop benefiting both nonprofits. It took place this year at Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort in Santa Barbara, and Captain Cardiac and the Coronaries played.

## NONPROFITS

Continued from Page D1

the rent is locked in at those rates for 10 years.

Don Lafler, president of the Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra, one of the State Street building's occupants, said his organization is paying slightly more for the rent at the center than at its previous office on East Gutierrez Street, but the advantage is that the Arts and Culture Center includes electricity and Internet access in the rent.

• Santa Barbara Dance Alliance, which has had to reduce hours to 50 a week from 80 for its three part-time employees, saving on rent by sharing an office with Santa Barbara Vocal Jazz Foundation at the Arts and Culture Center.

And nonprofits are exploring other ways they can work together, such as sharing a bookkeeper, said Lisa Holden, executive director of the Nonprofit Support Center.

The message for nonprofits, she said, is: "You don't have to do this alone."

Organizations have had to shift their thinking from an era of getting large donations in an affluent area to being on a budget, Ms. Holden said.

"It's a challenging year for all of the nonprofits," said Cecilia Rodriguez, executive director of Child Abuse Listening and Mediation.

Her agency, which helps 200 families a year in the prevention and treatment of child abuse, has felt the impact.

"At a time when our state funding and county contracts are cut, our requests for services have doubled (because of economy-related stress)," Ms. Rodriguez said.

CALM has met the challenge by relying on its reserves, Ms. Rodriguez said. "What I'm concerned about is next year because of the state and federal cutbacks that affect us."

Nonprofits say grants from foundations and corporations, both hit by the big dives on Wall Street, also have fallen, as much as 30 percent for some organizations.

Ms. Spiegel said that has meant losses in the tens of thousands of dollars for the local Alzheimer's Association chapter. But she added the board has decided not to cut services and hopes to make up the difference by doing better at the annual Memory Walk events, such as the ones Sept. 11 in Santa Barbara and Sept. 26 in Santa Maria; getting more donors; receiving grants from other foundations; and, if necessary, dipping into reserves.

And budget cuts after a 25 percent drop in donations to LifeChronicles led to the loss of a development director and a move to smaller offices in Santa Barbara.

That's when working with others made the difference, Ms.

Carter said.

LifeChronicles' new quarters didn't have enough space for the nonprofit's 20 interns, who videotape and transcribe the clients' messages for their families. But Unity Church in Santa Barbara stepped in and provided LifeChronicles the space for a small donation, Ms. Carter said. Previously, she had helped the church with a dance by giving it the decorations used for the joint sock hop with the Alzheimer's Association.

"We're finding ways to survive," she said, emphasizing she's grateful for every donation and is determined to keep serving families.

Another agency had to move into smaller quarters to make ends meet.

The Patricia Henley Foundation, which works with youths in the performing arts, moved from a 1,920-square-foot office costing \$3,000 monthly to a 600-square-foot office at the new Arts and Culture Center for \$1,000 monthly, said Chief Financial Officer Trixie Geyer. There's just enough space to walk between the desks.

Nonprofits have also cut down on their costs by going with less expensive fundraisers.

The national Muscular Dystrophy Association canceled its Black and Blue balls this year, including the one in Santa Barbara, because of their cost.

Close to 50 percent of the \$127,193 raised at the local Black and Blue Ball in 2008 went toward expenses, said Krista Harasymowycz, the Southern California regional coordinator. That left a net of \$65,489.

The emphasis now is on inexpensive ways to raise money, such as requesting donations at supermarket checkout stands or having firefighters collect contributions that fill their boots,

Mrs. Harasymowycz said.

It's easier to ask people for small donations during the recession than the \$175 for VIP tickets for the Black and Blue Ball, she added. "People don't have that kind of disposable income anymore."

The Fill-the-Boot campaign with Santa Barbara city and county firefighters in December raised \$34,873, according to Mrs. Harasymowycz. "It had a low-expense ratio."

The MDA also saved money by closing its Santa Barbara clinic and instead reimbursing patients for their mileage to drive to a Los Angeles clinic, said Gina Havelka, fundraising coordinator for the Mid-State MDA chapter, which serves Santa Barbara County.

On the plus side, the MDA hasn't seen a big decrease in grants from foundations and corporations, she said. The nonprofit doesn't receive government aid.

Elsewhere in Santa Barbara, New Beginnings Counseling Center decided not to have a gala this year and went with a less costly fundraiser: a murder mystery. But the May 5 Jesusita Fire led to cancellation of the May 7 event, and when "Clueless on State Street" was held a month later at Paseo Nuevo, it competed with high school graduations, Gary Linker, executive director, said. "We didn't make as much money as we hoped."

Despite the financial hurdles, Mr. Linker said his agency has remained successful by being efficient in managing its money.

During the past year, another local nonprofit, New Directions Travel For People With Disabilities Inc., has seen donations fall 15 percent from individuals and 30 percent from foundations. Fortunately, the agency, which provides travel tours for developmentally disabled clients, has been self-supporting

and hasn't had to rely too much on grants, Dee Duncan, founder and executive director, said.

She said the nonprofit, which operates on a \$1.2 million budget for fiscal year 2009 (roughly the same as 2008), has saved \$15,000 by letting go of its only full-time paid tour guide and \$10,000 by ceasing publication of its annual newsletter. Another \$20,000 was saved by reducing mailings to donors, she said.

Those aren't the kind of cuts Ms. Duncan said she wants to do for the long-term. But for now, the name of the game is survival.

"We've worked with the hotels and different tour operators to get the lowest fees possible," she said.

One big help, Ms. Duncan said, has been in in-kind donations. Hotels have donated room space for her clients, and Santa Barbara Airbus provides free transportation for New Directions clients' annual trek to Disneyland.

Some Santa Barbara nonprofits are affected more than others by cuts in government spending. For example, there's Casa Serena, which provides rehabilitation for drug and alcohol addicts and provides an alternative to prison time for nonviolent drug possession offenders under Prop. 36. But while a single large donation helped the budget rise to \$792,000 for fiscal year 2009 from \$750,000 the previous year, development director Jessie Stone expects cuts in county, state and federal aid. Already, Santa Barbara County has cut its support from about \$200,000 before the recession to about \$120,000. "We may lose (another) \$40,000 from the county," she said.

Casa Serena, about to start its 50th year, is seeking more donations from individuals.

"We just did a rummage sale. We knew it would not be an easy way to raise money," Ms. Stone said, adding her nonprofit is doing "anything and everything" to survive.

They all are.

e-mail: dmason@newspress.com