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Jeri Alcock

Nonprofit groups try to make giving easier

By CHRISTINA LENT

Of the Times

A network of Washington County nonprofit organizations will launch an ambitious philanthropy campaign inspiring people to invest in their hometowns.

"I Give Where I Live" encourages residents and businesses to help find solutions to some of Washington County's pressing problems.

Whether it's volunteering at a school, feeding the hungry, supporting the arts, working to maintain natural areas or donating to a cause that aids the homeless, organizers hope the campaign will help connect residents to local agencies that need their support.

"Every public benefit nonprofit is doing things in the community that make a difference in people's lives," said Susan Bender Phelps, of the Tualatin Hills Park Foundation, who helped



organize the campaign. "We want people to connect with a cause that touches their heart.

"We are one of the wealthiest counties in the state, yet non-profits here are really struggling."

"There's a good deal of charity giving flowing out of the county instead of being invested here," added Jeri Alcock, another campaign organizer and director of development for Community Action.

That trend is troubling to Alcock and Phelps, whose organizations provide services and

resources to aid people with the greatest needs.

"There are many nonprofits based right here, serving our local community," Phelps said. "These organizations need people's help, time and money.

"It makes sense for people to give where they live."

"Our campaign grew from the realization that many people who live and work in the various cities within Washington County are unaware of the numerous nonprofit organizations that make our community so wonderful," Alcock added. "There are lots of organizations with really

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important missions. We're all doing important work, but a lot of people don't understand the impact nonprofits have in the community."

The group today released a local giving guide and launched the Web site: www.iGiveWhereILive.net, to guide residents as they give to agencies.

The guide and the Web site offer giving options and a mechanism for people to get involved.

The guide, which is included in today's issue of the *Beaverton Valley Times*, includes opportunities to give, mission statements and future goals for an array of public benefit nonprofit agencies that serve Washington County.

"There's something for everyone," Alcock said. "We were looking for a cross section of missions that improve the quality of life in the community.

"We don't want to tell people what to support. We just want them to choose locally when they plan their charitable donations for the year. It's a matter of reinvesting in your own community."

Phelps agreed.

"Our hope is to be able to empower people in Washington County to make a difference where they live and work," she said.

An invitation

The Web site begins by highlighting seven local organizations, including SOLV, LifeWorks Northwest, Community Action, Tualatin Hills Park Foundation, Tualatin

Giving guide online

An online guide to giving and local nonprofit groups is on the Web at www.iGiveWhereILive.net.

River Watershed Council, Essential Health Clinic and the Vision Action Network.

After a review of how the site works, campaign organizers will add links to nonprofit agencies that qualify.

"We know that Washington County residents do care about the quality of life here — many of them just don't know where to begin," Alcock said. "The Web site is a place to start when you want to get involved.

"It will serve as a portal to all the Web sites of all the nonprofits. You will easily be able to connect with groups in the community to do what you want to do."

Because Pacific Continental Bank underwrote all of the costs for the site, residents and businesses that donate to one of the agencies can do it online without incurring administrative costs.

"What's unique about this effort is that we're banding together to pool our resources in an effort to be more efficient and create an increase in philanthropy in our community," Alcock said. "We'll learn next year if we've been successful."

In addition to tracking donations and volunteer hours in the coming year, local nonprofit leaders will also work to build partnerships with businesses and other community members.

"Everyone can be a philanthropist," Alcock said. "If every member of the community thought about supporting a cause that was important to them, we would be able to do wonders."

"This is an invitation for people to step out and make a difference," Phelps added.

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ALCOCK



PHELPS