 2016-2017

 Blossom Hill Home & School Club

 One Check: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the H&SC fundraising?

A: Due to a stagnant budget and rapidly increasing enrollment, Blossom Hill’s funds are stretched further than ever. In order to provide the high quality education our kids deserve and that Los Gatos residents expect, Blossom Hill now relies heavily upon parent support to bridge the gap. Over the years, the H&SC has transitioned from a traditional PTA organizing extra-curricular activities to one that funds academic programs, safety, emergency, technology, equipment, supplies, and much more. 84% of the H&SC’s $337k budget goes directly towards the gap in overall funding.

Q: How much does the H&SC actually need?

A: Our budgeted expenditure for the 2016-17 academic year is $337K, roughly $480.00 per child. We raise these funds in the year in which it is spent; In other words, we are committed to raising $337K this year, which is not enough to simply to meet our current obligations.

Q: If I donate to the One Check fundraiser, will I be asked for more donations in the future?

A: That depends. If everyone gave $480.00 per child, our fundraising obligations would be met and we would not need to ask again until next year. Last year, the One Check fundraiser, along with Corporate Matching, raised only 46% of total funds needed, requiring other fundraising efforts to make up the remaining operating budget. Family participation for the One Check requested donation last year was approximately 55%, and the average donation per family (not per child) was $275 (assumes 664 students), quite short of our actual need. In addition, only 85% of our families made the $35 per child donation requested for back to school supplies. The H&SC allocates $55+ per child for those same supplies. That’s a big gap.

Our goal this year is two-fold:

\* To increase financial participation to levels aligned with our community’s financial ability, where less than 2% of our students are considered “low income”.

\* To clearly communicate our needs and align donation requests with what we actually spend.

Other currently planned fundraisers for 2016-17 include the Harvest Festival, The Hive, and No Cost Giving no-cost programs such as Corporate Matching, eScrip, Box Tops, Amazon Smile Program, and fundraising opportunities from local restaurants and retailers. If participation levels of One Check and no-cost programs increase, events like the Harvest Festival may transition to community events with less focus on fundraising.

Q: Why are there multiple donation levels for One Check: Patron, Benefactor, and Donor?

A: The three levels are designed to accommodate each family’s individual financial situation. All students benefit from the H&SC funded programs, as every student uses school supplies/workbooks, is supervised on the playground, uses computers, prints projects, attends Youth Science Institute presentations, uses Accelerated Reader, has PE, is protected by Emergency staff and equipment, has access to the literacy specialist and Read Naturally program, and more! On average, each student receives $480 in benefits during the school year through the H&SC. The lowest level Donor at $75 per student, merely covers Back-to-School supplies and classroom workbooks, and is offered to families that simply cannot afford at this time to contribute towards the additional benefits the H&SC provides their students. The Patron level at $350 per student is in line with prior year requests and covers 75% of what the H&SC spends per student. The Benefactor level at $500 per student provides an opportunity for families who can afford to give more, to do so.

Q: My child doesn’t participate in H&SC extracurricular activities. Why should I give to the H&SC?

A: The extracurricular activities supported by the H&SC are largely participant-funded, meaning that programs such as Chorus, Honeybee Choir, Science Fair, and the school play require tuition for participation and sell tickets to performances to cover the cost of the programs. Every student, whether or not they participate in extracurricular activities, receives benefits from the H&SC to a cost of at least $480 per student. While financially not all families CAN support the H&SC, those who can but simply don’t feel compelled to donate take advantage of the generosity of others; Blossom Hill relies on financial support to continue to provide a high quality education.

Q: Can I buy student supplies on my own instead of donating?

A: Unfortunately, under our current system, no. Parents would have to spend more per student on essential school supplies than the minimum One Check Donor amount. The school purchases supplies in bulk at a significant discount, stretching those dollars much further and ensuring that each student has the same type and adequate amount of supplies throughout the school year. Teachers prefer this method as opposed to dealing with getting supplies from each student. As parents, we appreciate not having to go shopping for back-to-school shopping supplies!

Q: In addition to One Check, are there other ways to help the school?

A: Yes! There many ways to give that don’t require writing a check! Corporate Matching, eScrip, Box Tops, the Nob Hill Something Extra program and AmazonSmile are all completely FREE ways to contribute to our school. All that’s required of you is the time that it takes to sign up online for these various programs – a matter of minutes.

Q: How is Los Gatos Union School District funded?

A: The State and Federal Governments provide very little funding to the five LGUSD public schools. LGUSD relies heavily upon a blended funding model that includes local property taxes, a parcel tax, and grants from the five Home & School Clubs and the Los Gatos Education Foundation.

Q: Why is our district’s funding inadequate?

A: Since the enactment of Proposition 13, California has faced substantial declines in school funding. Even in an affluent town like Los Gatos, spending per student, when adjusted for regional cost differences, is approximately $3,000 below the national average of $10,763. Simply stated, the current funding of our public school system is inadequate to fund the programs, teachers, and materials needed to provide Los Gatos children with a quality, well-rounded education. With increasing enrollment and continued pressure on funding at the state and local levels, the need for additional, private funding will continue to increase.

Q: I pay high property taxes in Los Gatos. Isn’t that enough?

A: Sadly no. Your property tax dollars go to pay for a number of services – city government, police and fire protection, roads and infrastructure upkeep, county government and services, libraries, parks and, of course, schools. Only 20c of every $1 received in property taxes goes to LGUSD. Unlike neighboring districts such as Saratoga where property taxes are high and enrollment is low , Los Gatos property taxes provide little more than the minimum grant per child guaranteed to every California elementary school student regardless of affluence. In addition Los Gatos does not qualify for the significant supplemental grants that other districts receive for English Language Learners and low income students. This perfect storm places Los Gatos at a significant financial disadvantage making us the lowest funded district in Santa Clara County and one of the lowest in California.

Q: What are the Home & School Clubs and what do they fund?

A: There are five Home & School Clubs in LGUSD, one for each school in the district. Each club is a parent-run, non-profit organization dedicated almost entirely to fundraising for site-specific needs at each individual school. At Blossom Hill the site specific needs include:

Q: What is LGEF and what does it fund?

A: LGEF is the Los Gatos Education Foundation. Founded in 1982, LGEF is a parent-run, non-profit organization that raises funds to provide district-wide programs in science, music, art and technology.

Q: So which one do I give to? The Blossom Hill H&SC or LGEF?

A: The truth is, your financial support is absolutely needed in both places. Funds raised by the Home & School Clubs are spent at each individual school on things that would otherwise not be provided if the money wasn’t there. In many cases, those funds pay for things like school supplies, workbooks, various staff members, technology. (See your school’s H&SC web site for exact lists of what the funds pay for.) Funds raised by the Los Gatos Education Foundation are spent on district-wide programs. Art teachers, music teachers, science programs. It’s important to give as much as you can to both so that our district can continue to provide all of the things that we are proud to offer here in Los Gatos.

Q: What is the parcel tax?

A: In 1990, the Los Gatos and Monte Sereno communities passed the first ballot measure allowing the district to collect a per-parcel assessment from property owners benefiting the 5 LGUSD schools. Today, our parcel tax of $290 is up for renewal. per parcel generates $2.6 million per year for the exclusive use of LGUSD. It cannot be taken by the State. This funding is used exclusively in the classroom, for maintaining class sizes, retaining highly qualified teachers and providing quality programs.