

The new model for Sagebrush

Utilizing a new fundraising model, Sagebrush organizers hope to make a more significant impact.

by Kathy Oxborrow, for
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The Sagebrush Classic, a two-day event featuring celebrity chefs and a golf tournament, has raised money for Central Oregon nonprofits for 22 years, spearheaded by Gary Fish of Deschutes Brewery.

But in its 23rd year there have been some changes. New events were added this year, and the money raised will provide matching funds to the 106 nonprofits that are participating.

"Last year, the money we raised dropped significantly," said Fish. "We got 40 applications and funded seven."

Fish was looking for a more effective way to support nonprofit organizations. So when Aimee Baillargeon approached him about a fundraising model she'd seen work in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, he was open to restructuring.

Baillargeon was hired last September as the executive director of Sagebrush, the nonprofit under which the events occur.

The new model includes five separate events including the golf tournament and the celebrity chef's event, which took place during the week of July 9-16. (See sidebar for each event details)

Baillargeon and Fish's goal is to raise more money, fund more nonprofit organizations, reduce donor fatigue and engage the

entire community in raising money and attending the various events.

Fish said businesses get deluged with requests for contributions from the more than 600 nonprofits in Central Oregon. If corporations could make one large donation and not feel like they had to respond to every request that came in, that would ease donor fatigue.



Photos courtesy of Sagebrush

On the nonprofit side, all the money they raise in the name of Sagebrush goes into a separate trust account held by Sagebrush for each nonprofit until August 15. At the end of August, the funds solicited by Sagebrush through corporate and individual contributions plus event profits will be tallied.

This revenue will be used to match the money raised by the individual nonprofits. The exact percentage match by Sagebrush will not be known until fundraising efforts end in mid-August.

"We will cut checks to the nonprofits on August 31," said Fish.

Sagebrush sent out more than 450 notes to nonprofit organiza-

tions inviting them to participate. Fish said the community doesn't quite know what to make of this new concept. Baillargeon agrees.

"It's a difficult model to message, so we've been doing a lot of education and sitting down with donors one-on-one," she said.

They've also been holding monthly seminars for nonprofits to answer any questions their representatives may have.

Baillargeon believes this new model will be successful because Bend is already a very philanthropic community.

"If everyone got involved in the tri-county area, it would be pretty amazing," she said.

Fish's long-term vision is for the community to embrace this new model and make it successful.

"Deschutes Brewery will always be a sponsor," he said, "but the idea is that this should belong to the community and with this change this year, we really begin that process."

For more information visit www.sagebrush.org.



SAGEBRUSH EVENTS

Sagebrush events are for the entire community and include:

Community Challenge/Scramble — Participants receive a map with about 30 checkpoint locations just before the race begins. Each checkpoint, depending on distance and difficulty to reach, is assigned a certain number of points. The individual racer or team has 90 minutes to complete the scramble for points.

Street Fare — Modeled after the popular Deschutes Brewery event in Portland, couches were tossed out on Oregon Street, and local restaurants are invited to pair their specialty dishes with Deschutes Brewery ales for an evening of street food, live music and craft beer.

Private Dinners — Intimate dinners are served within a private home in Central Oregon. A local chef and a Sagebrush Feast chef prepare each meal.



Golf Classic — Cash, trophies and bragging rights are the golf tournament prizes for up to 52 teams competing in a best ball competition in this fierce but friendly golf tournament at one of the top golf courses in Bend.

Saturday Feast — With beer and food pairing by award-winning craft beer maker Deschutes Brewery, signature dishes from some of the world's best chefs are served.