

Compadres' milestone haul will aid more children

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A milestone in donations is enabling the Chandler Compadres to help more children in need.

The nonprofit organization took in gross donations of \$1 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30. The biggest beneficiary is the Boys & Girls Clubs of the East Valley's Chandler Compadres Branch, which received \$350,000, Chandler Compadres past president Ryan Foster said.

The Compadres awarded nonprofit organization ICAN \$200,000 and AZCEND was given \$120,000.

"It was very good news," Foster said. "We finally hit a million dollars raised last year, and we were able to distribute that out to several nonprofits in the area, all benefiting underprivileged kids."

"I pushed the guys and pushed the members that this was something we could accomplish. It's really the membership that stepped up. They met it head-on."

The Chandler Compadres hold fundraisers, including the Rock the Cause for Kids and the Compadre Golf Classic. People also make tax-credit donations.

Foster said Rock the Cause is the group's biggest fundraiser, featuring dinner, a concert and an auction.

"We're 40 active business owners in Chandler," Foster said. "We're really just leveraging relationships and go out and work hard."

He said the Compadres are "completely member driven" and do not



The Chandler Compadres celebrate reaching a milestone in donations after collecting \$1 million in gross donations last fiscal year.

hire administrators. For every \$100 raised, \$98.50 goes to beneficiaries.

Last year's Rock the Cause for Kids was headed by Nick Woodruff, assistant general manager at Kieckhefer Properties. Chris Nay, who owns an industrial services contracting business, was chairman of the annual golf classic. Todd Czaplewski chaired the campaign, urging donations through the state tax credit in 2017.

"Each member of the Chandler Compadres selflessly donates their time and resources to ensure that East Valley families in need are receiving the help they deserve," said Matthew Askland, chairman of 2018's Rock the Cause.

ICAN CEO Shelby Pedersen is grateful for the support the Compadres provide.

"Our relationship with the Compadres is all about helping kids," Pedersen said.

"There's three big things we do: we have an after-school program, parenting programs and community education. The Compadres program helps us underwrite field trips, curriculum; supplies we need, all of our employee training; after-school program."

ICAN would not be able to serve as many children as it does without the Compadres' support. Pedersen said ICAN helps about 200 youths a day in grades K-12 in its after-school program.

The \$200,000 ICAN received from the Compadres the previous year.

"This is a pretty substantial increase for us," Pedersen said. "That's a lot of money and it helps us do a lot of things with these kids. They're (Compadres) a great group; they absolutely pay it forward."

"They're such a good community partner, and they do care a lot about kids."

Some other organizations the Chandler Compadres will help include the Chandler CARE Center, which provides dental services for youths who would not otherwise be able to afford it. That organization will get \$60,000 from the Compadres, the equivalent of about 1,200 appointments per year.

The Chandler Service Club and Arizona Brainfood received \$30,000 to help with their Weekenders Program, which provides and fills boxes with nutritious, child-friendly food that is delivered to students in the Chandler Unified School District every Friday.

The Compadres also give out grants of \$2,500 each to organizations that apply for them. The charitable organizations must meet the Compadres' criteria, including helping underprivileged children.

In a good year, it is easy to provide organizations with the support they want, Foster said. Sometimes if the Compadres have to make a decision about which programs to support, the members will decide to aid one that helps the most youths.

For example, rather than awarding a scholarship of \$10,000 to one child, the organization would rather spend \$10,000 to support 30 fifth-graders going to a college preparatory program, Foster said.

"We'll move to where we get the most bang for the buck," he said. "Our whole philosophy is if we take care of our community and improve the lives of the youth in our community, it's going to help us all." ■