

Landfill grants to fill gaps for East County nonprofits

By Paul Burgarino Contra Costa Times

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Nonprofit agencies and community groups in East Contra Costa County will share a slightly larger pool of money collected this year for having a landfill in their backyard.

The Keller Canyon Landfill Mitigation Fund — gathered from fees negotiated between the county and landfill owners — will distribute nearly \$1.4 million in grants to 90 nonprofits and county programs. The grant allocations were approved this week by the county Board of Supervisors.

The total amount was about \$20,000 more than last year, but still down from some past years because of a decrease in fees paid by homebuilders who dump debris in the landfill, officials said.

More nonprofit groups received money this year than last, said Ed Diokno, policy adviser to county Supervisor Federal Glover, who represents District 5, which includes the landfill. Glover and county administrators decide how the money is distributed.

"Nonprofits took a big hit last year," Diokno said.
"The supervisor couldn't see doing that again given the big role they play in the community."

More groups asked for money than before because of the economic downturn and the uncertainty of receiving state and federal grants, he said.

Slightly less than half of the money, or \$669,701, went toward public safety and area code enforcement.

The \$90,000 that goes toward paying for an additional code enforcement officer will help keep the program from "being so spread out," because the other officer in the district is in the Bethel Island area, said Michael Angelo Silva of the county's building inspection department. Eighty cases — mostly foreclosures and abandoned vehicles — are pending in Bay Point, he said.

Normally, the Keller grants fully fund a resident deputy in Bay Point, though \$10,000 was left off this year. That means the sheriff will have to find a way to make up the difference, which Glover thinks can come from P-6 funds — special tax districts used to augment police service. The grants are important for nonprofit groups like The Positive Edge that find themselves hanging on by a thread.

With unemployment rising, Myrna Johnson of The Positive Edge said being in downtown Pittsburg is crucial to helping clothe clients referred from agencies like East Bay Works and Opportunity Junction. The Positive Edge received \$10,000 for its efforts to help build wardrobes and self-esteem.

Antioch-based Opportunity Junction also received \$10,000 for its job-placement program.

Veronica Pope, founder of nonprofit youth group People Who Care, also was pleased that the group received \$10,000 to continue paying stipends for the Hip-Hop Car Wash program.

The landfill was approved in the hills just south of a Pittsburg residential neighborhood by county supervisors in 1992. The mitigation fund is meant to ease the burden of those who must live near Keller Canyon. Pittsburg also gets a portion of the

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To view a list of the Keller Canyon grant recipients and how much they've received, go to ContraCostaTimes.com.

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