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Mariam Noland



President of the **Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan**

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Cultural groups light up Internet to make most of matching grants

By [Sherri Begin Welch](#)

On Tuesday morning, supporters of the **Arts Alliance** and six other Washtenaw County arts and cultural groups will gather at two cafe in Ann Arbor and Saline, poised to hit a button on their laptops at exactly 10 a.m.

They, along with supporters of 69 other local cultural groups from across the region, will be racing to make online donations in time to grab a share of \$1 million in matching funds — part of the **Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan's** online giving challenge.

"We're hoping to get at least 50 people to show up, but I imagine there could be more," said Angela Martin-Barcelona, marketing director for the Arts Alliance.

The Arts Alliance and other Washtenaw arts groups can't be sure how many people will show up given that they'll be using viral, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

They and other groups are using social media to not only rally supporters to donate during the online challenge, but also to build long-term audiences and supporters.

That's something the Community Foundation and its partner in the effort, the **Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan**, had hoped for when they set up the challenge and made an hour and a half workshop on social media tools one of the requirements for participants.

Community Foundation President Mariam Noland said the foundation benchmarked similar online giving programs through community foundations in Texas and Columbus, Ohio.

But the social media educational aspect to the local online giving challenge was something new the Community Foundation and Cultural Alliance brought to the concept.

The foundation gave attendees a thumb drive with the logo for the arts challenge and all the information they would need to start creating messages online in the hopes they'd become viral.

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Ann Arbor-based **Nonprofit Enterprise at Work** assisted with the social media workshops.

"We wanted to make this an educational opportunity ... to leave something behind (besides) the money," said Noland.

"The money is important, but we really wanted to bring attention to the cultural community and how important it is to the region," she said.

The Community Foundation is getting calls from around the country asking about the online arts challenge, Noland said.

"That's exactly how it's supposed to work."

Donors could have logged into www.cfsem.org as early as this past Friday to register to give so that their donations would be processed faster during the live, online challenge Tuesday.

A challenge button on the Community Foundation's Web site will take donors to an online giving platform administered by **Guidestar**, a nonprofit that provides both free and subscription-based information on other nonprofits.

Guidestar designated staff members to help arts and cultural groups set up profiles at www.guidestar.org that provide information beyond their 990 tax filings so donors and funders can get a better sense of the nonprofit, Noland said.

The online arts and cultural challenge Web site will show, in real time, a countdown of the remaining challenge funds left as they are used up, she said.

"Your guess is as good as mine," Noland said of how fast she expects the match dollars to go.

"It could be a week, days or hours ... we'll see how much the organizations have done to get their donors on."

Detroit-based **Arts & Scraps** for the first time filmed its own YouTube video for the online giving challenge, featuring three local boys singing a song about the online challenge and Arts & Scraps' mission. The challenge "intensified what we had been doing," said Executive Director Peg Upmeyer.

Arts & Scraps posted a video filmed by a commercial company on YouTube two years ago, participated in an Internet fund drive 18 months ago organized by *Parade Magazine* and **Network for Good**, and had Facebook and Twitter accounts. But it wasn't doing much with them, Upmeyer said.

With the Community Foundation's online giving contest, Arts & Scraps has been putting new emphasis on building a network of people following it on the Web, she said.

The contest will be a good test of how strong that network is, Upmeyer said.

"Our ultimate measure will be to see how many give (during the online challenge) but also how many people view the YouTube video," she said.

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