

Colorado Gives Day helps local groups

More than 30 local groups will benefit from donations made on Dec. 10

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EAGLE COUNTY — It's easy to drop some spare change in a Salvation Army bucket on a trip to the store. On Dec. 10, it will even be easier to drop a few dollars into your favorite charity's coffers without leaving the house.

Dec. 10 is the fourth Colorado Gives Day, a project established in 2010 by a group then known as the Community First Foundation and supported by Colorado-based 1stBank, which will process all Colorado Gives credit card donations without charging any fees. That's a sizable donation in itself — roughly \$250,000 — but the bank also will make about an additional \$350,000 available in various grants and awards.

The drive to collect a lot of donations on one day has been an

increasing success story. Organizers hope donations this year top \$20 million. In Eagle County, 34 local groups hope to raise about \$500,000 in just one day.

The donation total has grown as the list of nonprofit groups has grown. What started as a group of a handful of nonprofits has grown quickly as people running those groups have recognized the power of banding together for one big project. Since just this past year, another 13 groups have joined Eagle Valley Gives.

PROCEEDS GO TO SERVICES

Jason Denhart, head of the Eagle Valley Gives board, said 40 or more groups could be on the Eagle County Gives website next year.

There could have been 40 this year, but Denhart said several groups weren't able to finish the approval process in time to join the Colorado Gives effort this year. That's bad news for the groups, but good news for donors, he said.

Colorado Gives "is sort of the better business bureau of nonprofit groups in Colorado,"

Denhart said. Every group with an active profile on either the Colorado Gives or Eagle County Gives website has been strictly scrutinized — meaning that a group on those sites isn't going to spend most of its donations on overhead instead of services.

Eagle County Gives gets exposure from the Vail Daily as well as local radio stations. It also gets a good bit of support from local businesses, some of which encourage people to donate as they pay their bills.

For instance, Group 970 restaurants, a valley-based company that owns the Vail and Beaver Creek Chophouse restaurants and several others, is asking its guests on Dec. 10 to either "round up" their checks to the next dollar or make a separate donation. Each of the group's restaurants will match those donations up to \$250 per restaurant.

Group 970 communications manager Sara Franke said Colorado Gives Day is a good opportunity for the company to continue its charitable efforts during what's usually the busiest time of the year.

"It's neat to see how (local

HERE'S HOW TO HELP

Colorado Gives Day, held on Dec. 10, is a way to make online donations to more than 1,400 Colorado-based nonprofit groups, including more than 30 Eagle County charities. Those donations can be made without any credit card fees assessed that day, meaning every dollar goes to the charity of your choice. To learn more, go to either of these websites:

- ▶ www.eaglecogives.org.
- ▶ www.coloradogives.org.

groups) have grown that effort over the past few years," Franke said.

Denhart said some local lodges already put a donation box on guests' bills Dec. 10. Vail Resorts' lodges may follow suit next year.

"It's been great to see the buy-in from the local business community," Denhart said.

IT'S OK TO BE PICKY

One of the good things about Colorado Gives Day is how donors can pick and choose what nonprofit groups they donate to — it's as easy as picking a charity, naming an amount and clicking a box.

The Vail Valley Salvation Army hopes to raise \$50,000 on Dec. 10. Avon resident Dan Smith, a member of the Salvation Army board of directors as well as the

Vail Mountain Rescue Group, hopes the latter group will also have success in its first year on the Eagle County Gives website.

Denhart said the idea of raising a hefty amount of money for deserving causes is exciting in itself. But just as exciting is the way local nonprofits work together to drum up support for Colorado Gives Day. Groups have been "liking" each other on Facebook and other social media outlets to let their own followers know about the work other groups do, Denhart said. And the nonprofit coalition also presents a united front in advertising and promotions.

"After 20 years here in the nonprofit community, it's great we're spending time every month to talk about promoting each other," Denhart said.