

Less Trash Means Less Cash

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East County groups and services will receive nearly \$270,000 less this year in compensation from the Keller Canyon landfill.

The Keller Canyon Landfill Mitigation Fund — an amount derived from fees negotiated between the county and landfill owners — will distribute \$1.35 million in grants to 88 community groups and nonprofit agencies in East County — mostly in Pittsburg and Bay Point.

The grants were approved last week by the county Board of Supervisors.

The reduction is attributed a decrease in the tipping fees paid by homebuilders who dump debris in the landfill, officials said.

"The housing market and economy made a huge difference," said county Supervisor Federal Glover, whose district includes the landfill. He and county administrators decide how the money is distributed.

Although this year's sluggish economy has created greater need among community organizations, there was less money to give out, Glover said.

The fund helps finance a variety of programs, including energy-efficient lighting and children's programs at Antioch's El Campanil Theatre, aid for East County's neglected animals, supporting for after-school programs for teens at the Ambrose Recreation Center in Bay Point and dinners for low-income seniors and the disabled at Pittsburg's Stoneman Village.

But most of the money will pay for code enforcement, a school resources officer, crossing guards and a sheriff's deputy for Bay Point.

Without the annual landfill money, Bay Point's community upkeep "would suffer dramatically," said Thom Huggett of the county's building inspection department. About 50 code-enforcement cases are pending in Bay Point, he said, and the department wants to address foreclosed properties that have been neglected, he said.

Anytime the El Campanil Theatre gets money it's good news, said Rick Carraher, executive director of the theater foundation. The theater received \$16,020 in grant money to continue making its lighting more energy-efficient and \$1,780 to provide scholarships to help elementary-age students produce plays.

Ambrose General Manager Tarry Smith agreed, saying that "any help is a big help" for the park district's free program to help provide Bay Point teenagers a safe place to congregate after school.

Karen Bodiford, an administrator at Stoneman Village, said the Keller Canyon grant will help cut the costs residents with limited income pay for a one-meal-a-day program.

"It's important because it allows them to get out and socialize and get at least one nutritious meal a day," she said.

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 money.

The idea is to finance as many services as possible, particularly those benefit at-risk youths and senior citizens, and support community improvements, Glover said.

Officials with Glover's offices said they're working with groups that didn't receive money to find other sources of funding.

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