

Bill's Food Center 'supports Oregon' in many ways

By Hannah Disch
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For most of us, going to the grocery store is just another chore on our to-do list. We choose the store we will visit based on location, price, selection, or (for those of us with small children) on whether or not the store in question has a "car cart."

But for members of local nonprofit groups, going to the grocery store can mean a whole lot more, thanks to Bill's Food Center's "Supports Oregon" program.

Begun in 1996, the "Supports Oregon" program is Bill's way of giving back to the community that supports them.

The way the program works is simple. Local groups fill out a short form (available at the cash register) to apply for membership. If the Bill's employees who review the application are satisfied that the organization is indeed nonprofit, then the group will be accepted for membership into the program. After that, all the group's members need to do is to ask for a sticker to be placed on their receipts at checkout. Each group has a person who is in charge of collecting the stickered receipts and turning them into Bill's. At the end of each month, Bill's cuts a check to each participating organization for 1 percent of the receipts' total.

That 1 percent sounds like a small amount, but it really adds up. Karen Healy, who owns the store with her brother, Bill Faust, says "so far this year from January first we've donated \$8,352.62...and we've looked back over the years and since 1996 when the program started we've donated over \$150,000."

The groups that participate in the "Supports Oregon" program have put the money to good use and appreciate the support. JoAnn Dachenbach, a representative of Oregon Band Boosters says, "The Bill's receipt program has been a welcome benefit to the Oregon Band for many years. As the school budgets get tighter the money that goes into the music programs and other extra curricular activities gets harder to find...instruments need replacing and repair. And the money raised through the Bill's receipt program helps to do that. This money also helps to fund the summer Oregon Marching Band program...Funds for the marching band are used for fuel for the semi, props, food and cooking utensils, travel expenses, etc. The Oregon Band staff, students and parents appreciate the hometown support from Bill's and other Oregon businesses."

Pamela Crary, President of Oregon Straw Hat Players, adds, "Oregon Straw Hat Players is so grateful for the community support and the receipt program that Bill's



Karen Healy, who owns Bill's Food Center with her husband John and her brother, Bill Faust, says the business has donated more than \$150,000 since it initiated the "Supports Oregon" program in 1996.
Bill Livick photo

Food Center has to offer. Every donation that we receive goes into giving back to the community through theater. To name a few things, donations allow us to educate our youth, bring in professional staff as needed, enhance costumes, music, lighting, set design and sound, all so that our audience can see a wonderful show. "

Friends of the Oregon Library is another group that benefits from Bill's program. Their president, Beth Larimer says, "The Friends of The Library collects significant dollars every month from Bill's Supports Program. [This money] goes into our general fundraising account. We support the summer reading program each year (prizes, supplies, entertainers). We also pay to keep the gardens neat around the library building, and pay for extras like furniture, reupholstery, and materials set out for the public to take such as the 'Booklist.' We sponsor other speakers throughout the year, cover the cost of library staff appreciation dinners, and volunteer appreciation parties."

Speaking for Hillcrest Bible Church, Renae Sherven, says the church is thankful for Bill's donations.

"We have used those donations to supplement our current special projects. Some of these include finishing our parking lot shortly after our initial building expansion and the activity center building project," Sherven says. "Recent Bill's donations have been applied to our auditorium project to replace pews with chairs, increasing potential seating capacity and making the space useful for additional ministry activities."

Oregon's After School Clubs is another recipient of Bill's program.

"ASC benefits immensely from Bill's generous support," says Lisa

Gits. "The funds we receive from Bill's help us serve the financially challenged families in our center pay for tuition. This allows us to give continuity of care to our families we serve."

In all, approximately 31 organizations currently participate in the "Supports Oregon" program. Healy says the store still has new groups apply occasionally, but that most of the local nonprofit organizations are already members. She explains that most of their donations are now done through this program. "If people call and want maybe a case of pop, we'll do something like that but we try to tell people to get involved in this program. We try to mainstream it and go through this program and it's been working really well for us. We get thank you notes all the time from groups that are grateful for the money we've sent them back."

Bill's also gives back to their customers through a program in which they give people 10 cents for every cloth or paper bag they bring back in to have their groceries packed in. The store is a member of the Oregon Area Chamber of Commerce as well, and is always a sponsor of Summerfest.

But the "Support Oregon" program is really something special, Healy says.

"It's a really good program. People in the village really benefit from it, and you know, we're happy to be able to do it for them."