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Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary launches campaign to aid Food Bank

Submitted by Tom Black

At a time when demand for food among the neediest is particularly acute, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club has launched a fundraising initiative aimed at lending a hand.

The plan involves active partnership with another local Rotary club, Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise. They are working together in accepting donations of motor vehicles that are reconditioned and sold to the general public. The campaign is called Cars2ndChance.

The effort is headed by Dave Kemnitz, a longtime Rotarian who "conveniently" is owner of D&H Enterprises, an auto repair shop in Concord. Kemnitz hatched the idea while a member of the Clayton Valley Club. He recently transferred to Lamorinda Sunrise.

"The Clayton club did fine on its own," said Kemnitz, "but partnering with Lamorinda Sunrise marks a big step forward for the program."

Vehicles accepted as donations undergo a thorough inspection, reconditioned as necessary and sold publicly. All work is performed at his repair shop on Monument Boulevard. "The labor, which we do at cost, comes off the top of the resale price," he added.

Proceeds from each sale are split evenly between the two Rotary clubs. Lamorinda Sunrise has pledged that half of its share, or 25% of net proceeds, will be earmarked to support the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

A total of 150 vehicles were processed in 2019. Through three months of this year 50 have been processed. "We hope to do at least 200," said Kemnitz.

To date, proceeds from the sale of 55 donated vehicles and three RVs went in support of relief efforts involving the 2018 Camp Fire, which destroyed the town of Paradise. Total market value exceeded \$160,000, said Kemnitz.

Any vehicle with a title will be accepted, he added, and it need not be in running condition.

Topping the list in market value is a 2007 luxe motor home that sold for \$125,000. The fanciest two cars so far are a 2008 Lexus convertible and a 2007 Corvette, valued at \$16,000 and \$15,000, respectively.

On the lot at the repair shop when we spoke with Kemnitz was a freshly rehabbed 1999 red Mazda Miata convertible, stickered at \$6,999.

Kemnitz has cast a broad partnering net. In addition to the two Rotary clubs mentioned, there are 56 other partners, mostly additional Rotary clubs, but also churches, schools and other nonprofits.

There is no sunset date for the program, he said. "We plan to keep this going till the cows come home."

Those interested in an automobile, truck, RV, motorcycle or boat are asked to visit the www.cars2ndchance.org for instructions or to call (925) 326-5868. Any donation is tax deductible as a charitable gift.

Since its founding in 1975, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano has distributed more than \$56 million in food. Between the two counties, one resident in eight relies on the Food Bank for daily sustenance.