

Brew tour takes charitable giving message to Colorado Springs craft beer crowd

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The Community Partnership for Child Development is taking its message on the road in a vehicle inspired by, and tailored for, the craft beer demographic.

Hops on the Bus invites those of legal drinking age on board for a two-hour tour of three west-side Colorado Springs breweries, complete with chauffeured ride, beer samples and appetizers. En route to each location, participants get a primer on the countywide child welfare agency, its new project "Henry's Heroes," and the real-world impact of modest, incremental donations.

"We are always exploring new ways to bring the community together in support of early childhood education," said Noreen Landis-Tyson, CEO and president of CPCD, which for 27 years has coordinated child development programs, including Head Start, in El Paso County.

With its brewery-tour kickoff, sponsored by First Bank-Monument, the campaign is specific outreach to an untapped audience, said Amie Bennight, CPCD communications manager. That audience? Younger professionals who want to give back but maybe can't afford the lump-sum largesse of their more-established peers.

"There are many people who have a strong giving interest, but not the capacity of some of the successful folks in our community who give a lot all at once. We've got lots of younger folks moving into the professional world who are very interested in doing good in the community," Bennight said. "This event is an opportunity to get in front of them - with an actual face-to-face event on a school bus. And what fun to go on a brew tour while doing that?"

There won't be a test on the information imparted between breweries, but it's nonetheless critical.

Last year, CPCD was able to serve just more than 2,000 of the more than 10,000 children under age 6 living in poverty in El Paso County.

"Henry is the face of the children we serve, and 'Henry's Heroes' is our campaign to be able to provide more services for more of those children," Bennight said. "Some of these kids are living in cars. Some are homeless or haven't had meals since the day before. We've done a lot of listening and learning about the value of monthly giving. Even though it may be numbers that are smaller, the benefits of that long term is really significant."

A monthly gift of \$4 buys one book for one child; \$14 provides a child with classroom supplies, and \$40 buys a tank of gas for school bus transportation.

"We found that was really important, that people wanted to know what their gift does. This campaign really breaks it down in terms of where the dollars go," Bennight said.

"Henry's Heroes" donors receive emails, photos and videos with updates on the children assisted by their regular commitments. Bennight's agency also plans to host exclusive gatherings - such as "Heroes Happy Hours" - and events for the new subset of financial supporters and volunteers.

Let's not forget the costume.

"These donors are truly the heroes and we want to recognize them as such," she said. "And who doesn't want to wear a superhero cape?"

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