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By Dalondo Moultrie

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Though it's much earlier than usual, it's that time again and organizers of the Big Give Comal County are hoping people here and across the globe are ready to give big.

Big Give Comal County is part of The Big Give S.A., South Central Texas' 24-hour online day of online giving fueled by the power of generous donors, creative nonprofits, social media, collaboration, according to information on the thebiggiveSA.org website.

"The goal of the Big Give is to support the nonprofits in our region that are committed to making South Central Texas a great place to live, work, and play," the website reads. "Since 2014, 150,000 donors have given nearly \$15 million to (more than) 2,000 nonprofits through the Big Give, making it one of the most successful giving days in the country."

Brit King, president/ CEO of the New Braunfels Area Community Foundation, said about 70 nonprofits in Comal and Guadalupe counties had signed up to participate as of Wednesday, among hundreds more outside of the two counties. He said the NBACF has coordinated participation of nonprofits in the two counties for the past four years and it will continue this year, albeit about five weeks earlier than usual.

"Big Give is March 22. It's early this year," King said. "They normally do it in May. They found that if the Spurs were in the playoffs on that same day, it caused a problem. So they decided to change it to get away from Spurs playoffs."

The NBACF is a nonprofit organization that offers services and products to individuals and other organizations trying to do something philanthropic

or charitable in nature, King said. He said NBACF can usually make the process less expensive and easier.

King said the organizers of The Big Give four years ago approached NBACF about expanding the event beyond San Antonio and bringing Comal and Guadalupe counties into the fray.

Nonprofits in the two counties have consistently participated ever since.

The organizations that participate in Big Give are presented with valuable opportunities to expand their donor bases and diversify the funding they receive, King said.

"Most of the fundraising efforts for the average nonprofit is they try to get 100 people to give \$1,000 each," he said. "The Big Give is opposite. They're trying to get thousands of people to give \$10, \$20 whatever they can."

For Big Give, nonprofits sign up and then create pages on the big umbrella website. Representatives can alert people to the website and have them find their individual pages to donate or share, King said.

He said it's an extremely large networking opportunity. People who are on boards of nonprofits or volunteers can email everyone in their personal databases asking for donations during the Big Give.

Those donors can then pass along the messages to their friends to reach out to others.

"It's all done online in one day," King said. "There's no requirement to go to a fundraising activity like a fundraiser, a gala or golf tournament."

Big Give is important because it helps acquire funding for nonprofits that offer valuable services in communities like this one, King said. He and others involved are excited about this year's day of giving.

"Myself and our organization along with the McKenna

Foundation have put out a goal to raise \$500,000 that one day," King said. "In the past, we've raised in the neighborhood of \$300,000. It's not too much of a stretch."

Alice Jewell, CEO of the McKenna Foundation, said her organization is providing \$10,000 in prize incentives for Comal County groups participating in the event. Those dollars will go to groups the foundation currently works with or has worked with in the past.

The incentives are in place to help convince representatives from those nonprofits to try a bit harder and do a bit more to increase their donations and donor bases, Jewell said.

McKenna sees the incentive money as an investment, she said.

"We give a little bit and the groups get a lot. That is really key," Jewell said. "There are other prizes offered throughout the day by other donors too."

She said the foundation has set up a Comal County Big Give Facebook page for all to visit, use and share. A video has been produced featuring local people talking about Big Give and more.

Jewell said she anticipates big things this year from Big Give, including reaching that half-million-dollar benchmark the foundation and others set for this community.

"It's a lot but we can do it. I really have faith that individuals and businesses really will step up," she said. "We have more than 50 businesses and nonprofits participating this year. If everyone finds the one that their passions align with and everyone participates, we'll certainly meet that \$500,000 goal."