

PCDS helps public schools with tax-credit program

By Lindsay Norman

Phoenix Country Day School is beginning its second year of the Arizona tax credit donation program helping to fund two public schools in Phoenix.

Larry C. Kennedy School, which received \$18,000 last year, and Griffith Elementary, which received more than \$12,000 from last year's program, will participate again this school year.

The alliance between the three schools began last year when director of advancement at Phoenix Country Day School Tom Sylvester decided it was an important cause.

"I just realized no one was really pushing this kind of program," he said. Arizona's Legislature made about \$133 million in budget cuts to K-12 education this year.

The difference between a tax credit donation and a charitable contribution is that a tax credit reduces the amount of taxes owed at the end of the year to the government. For example, if one owed \$500 at the end of the year and had sent a tax credit donation of \$200 to a public school the amount owed would reduce to \$300.

It is a direct dollar-for-dollar reduction in taxes. A charitable donation reduces taxable income.

Donations must be made before Dec. 31 to be deductible. A single resident can donate a max of \$200 per year and a couple filing jointly can contribute up to \$400.

"The biggest problem we face is that people do not believe it is true, it just sounds too good to be true," Sylvester said.

This fall his school mailed out a pamphlet to more than 20,000 residents explaining the details of the program.

Kennedy and Griffith are ranked as Performing Plus schools.

"This program was a major part of the

achievement of the new ranking," said Evelyn Grace, the assistant principal at Griffith Elementary.

Principal Sean Hannafin of Larry C. Kennedy said, "Our school went from Underperforming to Performing Plus. We skipped the category of Performing all together."

This was accomplished, he said, in part through a new emphasis on the math tutoring programs the additional money helped support.

Both schools said that without the funds directed to them from Phoenix Country Day School, they would have had to reduce or eliminate these programs.

In 2008, the total tax credit and charitable donations to Larry C. Kennedy were approximately \$30,000, with Phoenix Country Day School's efforts contributing more than 50 percent of that revenue.

Griffith's donations from PCDS efforts accounted for around 30 percent of all donations.