

Charities seek \$\$\$ for great golf shots during AT&T Pro-am

By MARY BROWNFIELD

HOW MANY birdies will defending champ Phil Mickelson make during next month's AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am? He's not the only one hoping the answer is, "a whole lot."

The Monterey Peninsula Foundation, the nonprofit that presents the tournament each year and has distributed \$66 million to charities since Bing Crosby brought his clambake to Pebble Beach in 1947, embarked on a new charitable effort this year "to further strengthen its philanthropic endeavors."

The Birdies for Charity program asks donors to funnel money to their favorite nonprofit by committing to a pledge per birdie. The program occurs at PGA Tour events across the nation, but this is the first year it's being held in conjunction with the AT&T Pro-Am.

The Monterey Peninsula Foundation invited dozens of Northern California charities to take part, including the Carmel Foundation, which offers a host of services to members age 55 and older and is the largest provider of affordable housing for seniors in the Carmel-by-the-Sea.

"The Monterey Peninsula Foundation invited more than 80 charities to participate, and we accepted," said development associate Jennifer Martinez.

It and 30 other charities began soliciting pledges based on how well the pros score during the pro-am, which will be held Feb. 7-10 in Pebble Beach. Supporters can choose their charities and commit to giving a certain amount of money per birdie or make flat donations. The MPF will administer the program and provide a 10 percent match to each nonprofit based on how much it raises.

"It is a really good opportunity for us to have something new and get people excited about it, because people are really into golf," Martinez said. "We raise more than \$1.8 million every year, and this money will go toward the operating of our programs." The Carmel Foundation receives no government funds.

Lots of choices

To provide more motivation, the MPF is awarding prizes to donors via random drawings of completed pledge forms, and each form also offers a chance to correctly guess how many birdies will be made during the tournament and win a Norwegian Cruise Line seven-day trip for two to the Mexican Riviera.

Martinez said she and other Carmel Foundation staff also hope to generate excitement by wearing golf garb around the time of the tournament and inviting Pebble Beach Golf Links head pro Chuck Dunbar to speak to members about past and future AT&T pro-ams and preparations for the 2010 U.S. Open. Dunbar will speak Wednesday, Jan. 30, from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in Diment Hall at the Carmel Foundation. Refreshments will follow.

In addition to the Carmel Foundation, charities participating in Birdies for Charity are the Monterey-San Benito counties chapter of the American Red Cross, AT&T Pebble Beach Junior Golf Association, CASA of Monterey County, Community Partnership for Youth, Easter Seals Central California, George Mark Children's House, Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast, HOPE Services, Hospice Foundation, Interim, Inc., Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services, Monterey Bay Blues Festival, Monterey Bay Veterans, Inc., Monterey County Rape Crisis Center, NCGA Foundation, O'Neill Sea Odyssey, Parents Helping Parents, Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley, Salinas Valley Jr. Golf Association, Second Harvest Food Bank, Special Olympics Northern California, Inc., Stevenson School, Suicide Prevention Service, Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County, The First Tee of Monterey County, Unity Care Group, Central Coast YMCA, Salinas Community YMCA, YMCA of San Benito County and YMCA of the Monterey Peninsula.

People interested in pledging should directly contact their chosen charity or visit www.attpbgolf.com/birdies-for-charity/ for details. Martinez said Carmel Foundation supporters can find pledge forms in Carmel Bakery on Ocean Avenue, Jack London's on Dolores Street, at the foundation at Lincoln and Eighth, and online.

The 2008 AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am will feature pros vying for a record \$6 million purse. For tickets and other information, visit www.attpbgolf.com.