

Charitable giving on the increase in California

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Californians gave more to nonprofits and charities last year than they did in 2010, according to a recent report by the charitable research company Atlas of Giving.

In California, charitable giving grew by 7.1 percent, the report found. All states experienced growth, with the nation posting an overall 7.5 percent rise from the prior year, the study said. A total of \$346 billion was given nationally in 2011.

In the local charitable community, however, the report is being taken with guarded optimism.

"I would be very surprised if giving was up by that much," said Ruth Blank, executive director of the Sacramento Community Region Foundation, or SCRF. The agency is the largest local overseer of charitable funds established by individuals, families, businesses and organizations.

Blank is taking a wait-and-see approach with the results of the report's findings given that Atlas of Giving, an upstart in the charitable giving research field, is using a new analytics and algorithmic approach to crunching data and forecasting.

Blank believes any significant rise in giving may be the result of donors seeking to help sustain programs that have lost government funding. "There are a lot of programs that are not supported in public schools anymore, so private dollars are going there," Blank said.

Moreover, the national increases identified in the report may

not be readily reflected in the Sacramento metropolitan area as the region lags behind the nation in giving, Blank said.

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