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The Pitch 2026 Raises Over $200K for Nine San Luis Obispo County Nonprofits

An Extraordinary Night of Giving Celebrates Local Nonprofit Leaders and the Power of Community

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CA — November 12, 2026 — The Performing Arts Center San Luis Obispo came alive Tuesday evening as nine local nonprofit leaders took the stage for Must! Charities' The Pitch 2026. What unfolded was something electric. Nonprofit leaders shared the work they pour their hearts into every day, an audience eager to support them, and an overwhelming spirit of generosity that brought it all together.

And when the community was called upon to give, they answered, raising just over **$200K for local nonprofits** in an incredible show of support. Building on its inaugural year, The Pitch returned in 2026 with even greater momentum, celebrating the people and organizations working tirelessly to strengthen San Luis Obispo County.

Three Minutes on Stage. A Lasting Impact.

Three minutes. That's all each nonprofit leader had to share their story. But behind those three minutes were months of preparation and years of dedication.

Over three months, leaders from nine local nonprofits participated in five training sessions, worked alongside 20 volunteer coaches and marketing specialists, and strengthened their ability to communicate their missions with clarity and confidence.

The result was nine compelling presentations that brought the challenges facing our region into focus and celebrated the people working to address them.

"These nonprofit leaders are doing extraordinary things in our community every single day, often without much recognition," said Becky Gray, CEO of Must! Charities. "The Pitch gives them a chance to be seen, heard, and celebrated. But what moved me most was watching our community rally behind them. The generosity, the encouragement, the genuine connection between the audience and the people on that stage. That is the power of community, and that's why we created The Pitch."

The nine participating organizations represented a wide range of causes throughout San Luis Obispo County: City Farm SLO, Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO), Creative Alternative for Learning & Living (CALL), Friends of Camp Natoma, One Cool Earth, Paso Robles Children's Museum, Paso Robles Youth Arts Center, Positive Ride, and SLO Noor Foundation.

Big Stories. Big Impact. And the Winners Are…

After nine powerful presentations, judges faced the difficult task of selecting the evening's top honorees.

Congratulations to The Pitch 2026 award winners!

- **First Place — $20,000:** Positive Ride
- **Second Place — $15,000:** SLO Noor Foundation
- **Third Place — $10,000:** City Farm SLO & Paso Robles Children’s Museum
- **Five Remaining Presenting Organizations — $5,000 each**

But the celebration didn't end with the judges' awards.

Throughout the evening, audience members gave directly to the organizations whose stories inspired them most. At the end of the night, it was The Paso Robles Children’s Museum that received the most audience support and earned an additional $5,000 for the Audience Choice Award.

Together, the evening generated just over $115K in direct audience contributions, in addition to $85,000 in cash awards. Every dollar donated by the audience will go directly to the nonprofits selected by donors, turning generosity into meaningful support for organizations across San Luis Obispo County.

Beyond the financial support, participating organizations gained new connections, greater visibility, and an expanded network of people who now know their stories.

Mariana Gutierrez, Family & Community Support Services Manager of CAPSLO, shared, “I feel very empowered, not only for the community that I built here today, but the community I’m going to walk away with, and the opportunity to learn and to expand in experiences I didn’t even know existed. I’m really thankful for MUST! Charities.”

Justin Penrod, Executive Director of CALL, stated, “It’s surreal for it to be over just like that. I made more friendships within these last three months than I’ve made since I left high school. MUST! Charities has just been a big hug to us. And today, even though we didn’t win, we spread awareness. And that’s all we can ask for. So every donation was a gift, and we love everyone for that.”

The Real Impact Goes Beyond One Night

For Must! Charities, The Pitch has never been just about one evening or who takes home the top prize. It's an investment in nonprofit leadership, equipping participants with the skills, confidence, and relationships to advance their missions.

Tuesday night was a reminder of what makes San Luis Obispo County special: leaders dedicated to helping others and a community willing to invest in a stronger future.

Must! Charities extends its heartfelt appreciation to the participating nonprofits, volunteer coaches, judges, sponsors, and community members who made the evening possible.

Special thanks to the generous sponsors who helped bring The Pitch 2026 to life:
Acacia Productions, Banc of California, Corvus Wealth Advisors, Golden 1 Credit Union, JB Dewar, KSBY, Mechanics Bank, StoryLabs, The Blueprinter, The Sign Place, UMB Bank, and our Wine Supporters: Barton Family Wines, My Favorite Neighbor, Niner Wine Estates, O’Neil Vintners and Distillers, and Ridge Wines.

The applause may have ended Tuesday night, but the impact of The Pitch is just beginning.

About Must! Charities

Must! Charities is a San Luis Obispo County nonprofit dedicated to changing the model of philanthropy. Founded in 2012, Must! brings people, businesses, and nonprofits together to invest in solutions that strengthen the region. Through collaborative partnerships, strategic community investments, and leadership programs like The Pitch, Must! helps local nonprofits build the capacity to create meaningful, lasting change. 100% of Community Giving Funds go directly to community projects.

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