

M Spending hits \$800,000

by Kerrie Russell - Staff Writer

More than \$800,000 has been raised by campaigns for and against Measure M and in the final week, money is expected to keep pouring in.

If passed, Measure M would place a 10-year moratorium on genetically engineered organisms in Sonoma County and the debate has proven to be expensive.

The Family Farmers Alliance, which opposes Measure M, is sponsored by the Sonoma County Farm Bureau. During the final comprehensive reporting period, from Sept. 25 through Oct. 22, the Family Farmers Alliance reported \$47,991 in monetary contributions, a \$90,000 loan from the Sonoma County Farm Bureau and \$1,978.25 in non-monetary contributions (including volunteer time and office supplies from the Sonoma County Farm Bureau).

"We are continuing to raise money," said Rob Muelrath, political consultant for the Family Farmers Alliance. Muelrath said he hopes they can raise the money to pay back the loan before the campaign is over. "We'll continue to raise money after the campaign if it takes longer," he said.

Since the beginning of the campaign, the Family Farmers Alliance has received \$420,566.10 in contributions (including the \$90,000 loan). Of that total, the Sonoma County Farm Bureau has contributed \$150,491.25 to the campaign, 36 percent of the total amount raised.

The GE Free Sonoma County campaign, in favor of Measure M, receives major funding from the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center. In the last month, GE Free Sonoma County reported \$113,244.19 in monetary contributions. Of the total received, \$72,435.68 was contributed by the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center, 64 percent of the total raised.

Since the beginning of the campaign, the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center has contributed \$281,033 of the total \$388,192.19 received, more than 72 percent of the total.

"We're going neighbor to neighbor," said Dave Henson, director of the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center. "We haven't had the money to do the TV and radio ads that they're doing and we don't have the ability to deficit spend," he said.

Both sides are spending the money as fast as it comes in. GE Free has spent \$385,322.01 of the \$388,192.19 they raised. The Family Farmers Alliance has spent \$431,812.59 (including \$23,323.63 in unpaid bills) of the \$420,566.10 raised.

Major spending on both sides has centered around campaign literature and mailings. Last reporting period, the Family Farmers Alliance spent more than \$120,000 on campaign literature and postage and more than \$220,000 on TV or cable airtime and production costs. GE Free Sonoma County spent more than \$81,000 on campaign literature and postage and \$47,000 on campaign and legal consultants.