



**BERRIEN**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.™

# Berrien County Gives Back

## NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023



## And the winners are ...

We celebrated a pretty sweet year of philanthropy at our Annual Meeting & Celebration. And, **we awarded \$229,000 in one night!**

The night was a celebration of all the good things that happened over the past year: grantmaking to the tune of **\$6.9 million, including \$368,000 in academic scholarships**; handing out **3,000+ backpacks filled with school supplies** at Backpacks For Good events in **FOUR** Berrien County locations; giving away more **Senior Care Kits (900+!)** than ever before to low-income seniors citizens across the county; and the launch of **Gotcha Doin' Good** – a new way to recognize your friends and neighbors who are making our corner of the world a little bit better.

The major highlights of the night were announcing the winners of the **Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability Grant, Carolyn's Kids grant, The Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant, Golden Acorn Volunteer Award and Golden Acorn Excellence Award!**

*More winners on the inside!*

### Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability Grant



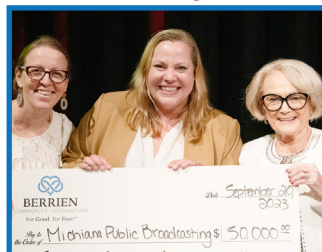
*Benton Harbor Community Development Corporation to hire a fundraising professional to help the nonprofit scale up in size and impact, and for salary support and health benefits for the small staff. Pictured are BCF board member Karen Ytterberg and BHDC Executive Director Ashley Hines.*

### Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant



*Rising Kites to support launching a coffee shop that employs people with disabilities. Pictured are Love Your Community grant review committee member William Marohn and Rising Kites Executive Director Danielle Grandholm.*

### Carolyn's Kids



*Michiana Public Broadcasting for PBS KIDS television channel and education outreach, and ZoY! Expeditions for startup costs as a nonprofit that seeks to get kids into the great outdoors.*



*Pictured are, at far left, Michiana Public Broadcasting's Heather Frey and Amanda Miller Kelley, and grant creator Carolyn Hanson; and at left, Carolyn and ZoY! Expeditions founder Al Mussman.*

# Standout Volunteerism

Every year at our **Annual Meeting & Celebration**, we recognize community members and nonprofits who go above and beyond what is anticipated in their roles.

**Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency** (SMCAA) was selected as the **2023 Golden Acorn Award for Excellence**. SMCAA stepped up to the plate when BCF had an unexpected need for a food provider for all four Backpacks For Good events.

They went above and beyond in providing food boxes to all 442 families who attended Backpacks For Good. They provided a standard food box and baking bag complete with flour, sugar and other baking items, as well as bringing a giant chest freezer so each family could go home with a frozen chicken.

Along with the recognition, SMCAA received a \$3,000 grant.



*Berrien Community Foundation Board of Director's John Guinness (center) presents the Golden Acorn Excellence Award to Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency's Josh Bushore (left) and Yvonne Vidt.*



**Rochelle Ulleg** (at left) and **Berrien County Sheriff Paul Bailey** (below) were both honored with Berrien Community Foundation's **Golden Acorn Volunteer Award** for the work they have done with Backpacks For Good, a school readiness event that gives away 3,000 backpacks annually.

Called the "OG" of backpack event volunteers, Ulleg led the charge in connecting BCF staff with donors and community members when the event launched a handful of years ago for the Coloma/Watervliet area. And every year, she volunteers in some capacity.

Bailey is the reason we were able to offer Backpacks For Good to Eau Claire students this year for the very first time. Bailey went around to community members and businesses to gather funding and the volunteers needed to make a great event!

Both Ulleg and Bailey will receive a \$1,000 grant to be directed to a nonprofit of their choice.



## Welcome, Nicole!

Nicole Grant is the newest staff member at Berrien Community Foundation! She was hired into the role of program officer.

In her role, she will assist in the administration of grants, scholarships and other special projects.

"I am thrilled to be here working for BCF," Grant said. "I'm looking forward to helping people in new ways and learning even more about our community."

Grant previously worked at Emergency Shelter Services as a case manager to assist those experiencing homelessness in getting resources. She also helped people with back rent and utilities during the pandemic.

In her spare time, Grant loves cooking, picnics, barbecues, parks, traveling and spending time with her family.





## Food For Good Goal Met!

The **Food For Good** challenge launched by Berrien Community Foundation has met its goal to ensure mobile food pantries are fully funded in Berrien County!

Earlier this year, BCF extended a \$20,000 community challenge to meet the anticipated funding gap for **Feeding America West Michigan's** mobile food pantry program. Feeding America West Michigan Mobile Food Pantries (FAWM) provide weekly fresh food in neighborhoods throughout Berrien County. This year, because of increased food prices and supply chain issues, the organization anticipated a \$40,000 funding gap.

But that need has been met.

"It really was a community effort to rally around FAWM," said BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey. "Gifts ranged from \$20 to a thousand or more — every cent counted, and everyone pitched in."

Conversations with FAWM and other local food pantries led the BCF team to create the **Food For Good Fund**. BCF already had the **Feeding Berrien — Terry N. & Maryfran Tieman Endowment Fund** that helped with this initiative. Terry & Maryfran Tieman had the foresight to set up an endowment to help with food needs in the community.

**Donations are still being accepted as BCF continues to address food insecurity in Berrien County.** To donate to the Food For Good Fund, checks can be mailed to Berrien Community Foundation, 2900 S. State Street, Ste. 2E, St. Joseph, MI 49085 and reference Food For Good, or online at [www.berriencommunity.org/foodforgood](http://www.berriencommunity.org/foodforgood).

## New School Year, New T.E.A.M.

It's a new school year, so that means there's a new cohort of Berrien Community Foundation's youth advisory council, T.E.A.M.!

**Teens Exhibiting Able Minds (T.E.A.M)** provides a unique opportunity for students in Berrien County to learn about local nonprofits in a hands-on way, and award funding to projects and programs while making a difference in their communities.

T.E.A.M. is a committee of 8th-12th graders that awards about \$50,000 a year in grants to programs and projects serving youth through education, after-school programs, youth empowerment and more.

Although T.E.A.M.'s current year of service has started, recruitment is still open as the group aims to expand. T.E.A.M. is seeking 8th-11th grade students who are interested in making an impact in their community. To learn more or apply, visit [www.berriencommunity.org/team](http://www.berriencommunity.org/team).



# New Board Members

We welcomed three new board members in September: Elizabeth McCree, Philip Molloy and Alexis Harris.

## Elizabeth McCree

Elizabeth is looking forward to giving back to the community that has given her so much.

Elizabeth is an attorney who represents children in child protection, probate and juvenile delinquency cases, as well as disabled parties. She owns her own law firm, the Law Office of Elizabeth McCree, which she opened in 2015. Elizabeth has been practicing law for 15 years. She also is an instructor at Andrews University teaching legal studies, history and political science.

When Elizabeth is not working, she loves traveling and going on history tours. She is also the “queen of Disney sing-a-long songs.”



Elizabeth McCree

## Alexis Harris

Alexis wanted “to be part of something great” and knew her financial experience and perspective could be of an additional, valuable insight as BCF moves toward the future.

Alexis is the community reinvestment act officer for Horizon Bank. She’s been in the banking business for more than 25 years, starting her career as a teller and moving on up through the ranks. She took a brief break from banking and shifted career fields to therapeutic counseling, becoming a behavioral therapist and addiction counselor before returning to the banking world.

She and her husband of 26 years have five children. One of her favorite things to do is roller skating. She also has 60+ first cousins!



Alexis Harris

## Phil Molloy

As part of BCF’s board, Phil is excited to contribute to building strong, vibrant and sustainable communities, and giving back to the community his family has called home for over 15 years.

Phil is the product quality lead for Whirlpool Corporation’s U.S. refrigeration department. He leads teams to improve products and he also mentors employees. He’s been at Whirlpool for more than 33 years and in that time he has worked in laundry and refrigeration, and has been a product development engineer, process improvement engineer, plant quality manager, innovation lead and capabilities lead.

Phil enjoys spending time with family and friends, running, biking, and traveling. He also plays the drums! He’s played with groups in Mexico and Jamaica, is part of the 1980s rock cover band WYSIWYG and plays at First Church of God.



Phil Molloy