

BCF Grant Helps Renaissance Team Hit High Note With Seniors

Renaissance Enterprises' visits were always music to the ears of residents of local senior care facilities, but their presence became even sweeter as the audience experienced increased isolation due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"We've been doing everything we can to get programming to them," said Bob Rowe, Renaissance Enterprises' executive director. "It's not been easy."

But their dedication is what fueled the desire to innovate how they deliver their services.

"So many of them have no one to visit them, so the programs are a real lifeline to their lives," Rowe said about the difference Renaissance Enterprises can make.

About 30 artists make up the Renaissance team who are then tapped to perform at nearly a dozen Berrien County senior care facilities throughout the year. Performances are not just limited to music – visual artists also provide interactive demonstrations of their talent, such as painting. The acts – especially the musical

ones – can jog fond memories or transport seniors back to their childhood. The performances also provide a sort of camaraderie, he added.

Though they kept a schedule on par with 2019, 2020 was marked by social distancing and masks. The acts were flexible to adhere to guidelines so they could meet the needs of seniors by performing

outside or staying in designated spaces indoors. The innovation continues to this day as Rowe is currently working with a facility to stream performances to residential rooms on a closed circuit television.

A For Good Grant from the Berrien Community Foundation allows Renaissance Enterprises to continue bringing smiles to faces.

"(The grant) made all the difference in the world," Rowe said, noting personal donations to the organization had fallen last year. "The Foundation's support was crucial, or otherwise we would've had to cut (programming) way, way down."



Acts from Renaissance Enterprises perform outside a senior care facility in 2020.

BCF Upcoming Due Dates for Grant Programs

- February 10** – Heart of Cook Foundation Grants
- February 15** – Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants
- February 24** – For Good/For Ever Grants
- March 10** – Heart of Cook Earth Day Grant
- March 15** – Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants

Meeting the Needs of Nonprofits - For Good. For Ever.



“It decimated our operations,” said Andrew Robinson, executive director of Mosaic Christian Community Development Association, of the COVID-19 pandemic. “The For Ever Grant helped us to pay payroll and meet basic expenses.”

Berrien Community Foundation’s For Ever Sustainability Grants were established as a one-time opportunity to help nonprofit organizations during COVID-19. But, as the pandemic continues to impact nonprofits, Berrien Community Foundation will again offer this support during the Spring 2021 grant cycle.

“Our nonprofits are still struggling,” said BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey. “Fundraising events are still on hold and many organizations remain in survival mode.”

In the summer of 2020, BCF gave \$200,000 in For Ever Sustainability Grants along with traditional For Good Grants for specific projects in the fall. With a **February 24 deadline**, Berrien Community Foundation will review both sustainability and project grants - For Good. For Ever.

“We need to remain flexible and meet the needs of our nonprofit community,” said BCF Program Manager Susan Matheny. For more information on how to apply for these grants, visit the BCF website at www.BerrienCommunity.org/grants.

“It devastated us ... The money that has come from the For Ever Grants, our ability to use that to pay our basic bills, is what is going to save us.”

**-Katha Kissman,
New Buffalo Railroad Museum**

Scholarship Season Begins at BCF

The Berrien Community Foundation is gearing up for another year of handing out thousands of dollars in scholarships to local high school seniors.

Last year the Foundation awarded almost \$250,000 in scholarships, and has added three new opportunities for students this year. **The deadline to apply is March 5, 2021.**

“Thanks to our generous donors, the BCF Scholarship program is growing and allowing us to help more and more students get the education they need to pursue their dreams,” said Berrien Community Foundation President Lisa Cripps-Downey.



The three new scholarships provide opportunities for both high school seniors and adults seeking higher education. The **Marion and Dan Crossman Scholarship** provides educational opportunities for Benton Harbor and St. Joseph high school students going into the field of education. The **June Rollinger Family Scholarship** was established to provide educational opportunities for Berrien County high school students or adult residents returning to school after a gap of time and going into a health-related field. The **Coach U Scholarship** was established to encourage success in furthering education for a deserving Benton Harbor High School graduating senior who also participated in sports during their time at Benton Harbor High School.

View available scholarships at: www.berriencommunity.org/scholar.

Welcome, Kelly!

Bridgman native Kelly Gampel joined the Foundation’s team as the Communications Associate in November 2020.



Equipped with a degree in journalism from Cornerstone University, she’s spent her career working at newspapers and in higher education writing, photographing, shooting video and utilizing social media to communicate ideas and stories to those around her.

Her experience will help the Foundation better serve the community by keeping people more informed.