



BERRIEN
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.™

Berrien County Gives Back

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2024

INSIDE: BCF Awards a Half Million Dollars in Scholarships!



BCF Celebrates \$1 Million Grant to Create Park

Berrien Community Foundation's work with Benton Charter Township has landed a **\$1 million Michigan Department of Natural Resources Spark Grant** to create a fun, family-friendly recreational park in Benton Heights.

"This project was incredibly important to BCF for many reasons, but one of the biggest was to improve the quality of life of local residents," said Berrien Community Foundation President Lisa Cripps-Downey. "There currently are no public parks in Benton Heights but there are more than a thousand adults and children within walking distance."

Plans for the new park — which will be located near the intersection of Euclid and Laurel avenues behind the former Martindale Elementary School — will transform a vacant lot owned by the township into a 10-acre park. There will be a playground, pavilion, splash pad and a 3/4-mile walking trail winding through existing woods. There is also room to possibly expand to include other features such as sporting fields and courts.

The design and location of the park came directly from community input, which was gathered during several community events and through an online survey organized by a partnership between New Heights CCDA, Benton Charter Township and Berrien Community Foundation.

"We are so incredibly thankful for everyone who put time and effort into turning this dream into a reality,"



Pictured behind Benton Charter Township Supervisor Cathy Yates is a 10-acre plot of land that will be transformed into a recreational park that includes a splash pad, pavilion, walking trail and playground.

said Benton Charter Township Supervisor Cathy Yates, who has worked on the project for more than a year. "This new park is going to be the local go-to place for children and families alike to spend quality time outdoors, visit with neighbors, exercise and have fun."

The goal of the CMF/DNR Spark Grant Program partnership is to improve healthy spaces in communities experiencing significant levels of health, social and economic disparities. This grant is to help "opportunity communities" mitigate the effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as financial hardship and isolation.

Want to read more? Visit
www.berriencommunity.org/news



www.berriencommunity.org



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Backpacks For Good

Backpacks For Good is right around the corner!

Our school readiness events are a wonderful opportunity to bring communities together while giving away backpacks full of school supplies. Help us spread the word about our events by sharing our social media posts.

Want to volunteer? Head to

www.berriencommunity.org/backpacksforgood to signup!

Students Attending Eau Claire Schools:

Thursday, August 1, 2024 from 6 – 8 p.m. at Lybrook Elementary School. This event is open to students attending Eau Claire Public Schools, regardless of the ZIP code in which they live.

Students Who Live In The 49022 Zip Code:

Tuesday, August 6, 2024 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park. This event is *in partnership with National Night Out*, and is open to students who live in the 49022 ZIP code, regardless of the school they attend.

Students Attending Niles or Brandywine Schools:

Thursday, August 8, 2024 from 4 – 6 p.m. in the Niles High School parking lot. This event is open to students attending Brandywine Community Schools or Niles Community Schools, regardless of the ZIP code in which they live.

Students Attending Coloma, Watervliet or Hagar #6 Schools:

Thursday, August 15, 2024 from 4 – 6 p.m. in the Coloma High School parking lot. This event is open to students attending Watervliet Public Schools, Coloma Community Schools or Riverside Hagar #6 School, regardless of the ZIP code in which they live.

Gotcha Doin' Good!



Gordon Dill has helped hundreds of people fall in love with the sport of pickleball. He was instrumental in bringing the tennis-like game to the St. Joseph-Lincoln Senior Service Center and designing what the program for senior citizens might look like. He teaches a beginners class there, too!



Students from Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Schools gathered to clean up the yard of a St. Joseph woman before she returned home for the summer! From trimming branches, raking up leaves and tidying up the greenery around the house, these students did awesome work! Big thanks to Kaya L., Izzy S., Abby S., Allie G., Lily H., Josie B., Amelia L., Claire J., Owen M., Ronan M. and Paul P. for all their hard work!

Nominate Someone!

Gotcha' Doin' Good highlights people in our community who are making our corner of the world a better place. If you'd like to nominate someone for our **Gotcha' Doin' Good** spotlight feature, visit www.berriencommunity.org/gotchadoingood, email kellygampel@berriencommunity.org or give us a call at 269-983-3304.





BCF Awards Over A Half-Million Dollars in Scholarships

Berrien Community Foundation is sending out **more than a half-million dollars in scholarships** to college-bound students this fall.

“For the first time ever, we are sending more than half a million dollars out to students chasing their academic goals,” said BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey. “That is \$500,000 in student loans that they collectively don’t have to worry about. It’s because of our wonderful and generous donors that we have reached this milestone.”

In total, **91 scholarships were awarded to 86 local students for a grand total of \$533,000.**

BCF offers scholarships for graduating high school seniors, students currently in college, adults returning to the classroom and students going into the trades.

Four new scholarships were added for the 2023-2024 school year — the **David and Kathleen Bradley Scholarship, Jon and Chenai Gillispie Trades Scholarship, New Futures Scholarship, and Ruth Ann and Louis Harvey Benton Harbor Youth HBCU Scholarship.**

“It’s because of families like the Bradleys, Gillispies and Harveys that we are able to say that, to date, Berrien Community Foundation has awarded more than \$4.3 million to local students,” said Berrien Community Foundation Program Director Susan Matheny. “There’s so much to experience at college or trade school. These scholarships allow students to learn and explore all that higher education has to offer.”

To read a list all winners, visit www.berriencommunity.org/news

Where Are They Now?

Receiving a scholarship from Berrien Community Foundation was the confirmation Kate Rendell needed to know she was on the right track.

Rendell, who is now the executive director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Southwest Michigan, remains thankful for receiving the **Dunn Scholarship** and **Upton Opportunity Scholarship** in 2019 when she restarted college.



Kate Rendell

“To be supported by an individual is one thing,” said Rendell. “But to be supported by a group of strangers who want to see change and improve people’s lives — it really gave me a lot of confidence and drive to continue on.”

Rendell’s past experience working with children in the foster care system broke her heart wide open and told her there was still more work that needed to be done.

CASA advocates for children in the foster care system. They dive deep into the child’s case and learn everything they can about the child’s life so they can be the best advocate possible for them when working with lawyers, social workers and the court.

Want to read more of Kate’s story? Visit www.berriencommunity.org/news

Welcome, Pam & Elena!

Pam Dolezan and Elena Rockette are the newest additions to the team at Berrien Community Foundation.

Pam joins as a part-time finance associate after retiring in the fall. She spent more than 35 years on the trust and wealth management side of banking. She will help with the day-to-day tasks of the finance department.

Pam enjoys gardening, watching her grandkids play sports, visiting local wineries and breweries, and watching sunsets.

Elena is BCF's community service intern for the summer. She spends her time on **Backpacks For Good** projects. Her previous work experience includes being an employment specialist, working in foster care and helping people with developmental disabilities or socioeconomic issues.

Outside of work, Elena enjoys reading, walking, writing devotions, watching shows and being with friends and family.



Pam Dolezan



Elena Rockette

Until Next Year!

The 2023-2024 cohort of **Teens Exhibiting Able Minds (T.E.A.M.)** members has left a lasting imprint on Berrien County as they ended their year of philanthropy in June.

T.E.A.M. awarded **\$35,500 in For Good Grants** to six organizations and **\$5,000 in Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants** to support 15 classroom projects. Each member of the group also spent approximately 25 hours volunteering throughout the school year.

Their end of year party was held at Water Street Glassworks where they learned about the nonprofit and glassblowing, then created their own fused glass nightlight.



We are looking for Berrien County teens to join T.E.A.M. for the upcoming school year! If you know a teen who wants to make a difference for youth across the county, visit www.berriencommunity.org/TEAM.

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants — September 15

For Good Grants — October 1

Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants — October 15

Howard Facilities Grant — November 1

Howard Youth Grant — November 1

visit www.berriencommunity.org/grants to apply

Save The Date!

September 18

Annual Meeting