



BERRIEN
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.SM

Berrien County Gives Back NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026

INSIDE: Welcome to BCF, Quini and Denalia!



For Good Produce Project Delivers Fresh Food, Lasting Impact

Summer in Southwest Michigan means fresh produce season has arrived.

With BCF's **For Good Produce Project**, community members are bringing local farm-fresh fruits and vegetables home while helping provide that same healthy food to food pantries.

In partnership with the **Nutrition Exchange of Southwest Michigan**, the program let residents purchase a subscription to a bi-weekly box of locally grown produce. The bonus is that 70% of the net proceeds go right back to local farmers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for our food pantries.

"The variety and freshness is unbelievable," said Robin Lydick, who purchased a subscription. "I love the recipes they put in and it's just a great program!"

Community members have already enjoyed summer favorites like blueberries and cherries sourced from local growers, thanks to connections cultivated by Dad's Farm owner Ashlee Hacker.

"I wanted to create something that brings our region's most valuable resources together in a way that has the greatest impact on both farmers and residents," said Hacker. "Connecting over food is such a wonderful way to engage with your friends and family and we get to support our local farmers while doing it."

One of those local partners is Jollay Orchards.

"We love our community and are excited to share our first pick of the season," said Jon Jollay. "Fresh from our trees to your table, Jollay Orchards is proud to team up with BCF's CSA program this year."



Above: Ashlee Hacker pours blueberries into containers for the For Good Produce Project.



Left: Zack East shows off the produce he received in his box.

BCF Gears Up For Backpacks For Good

Berrien Community Foundation is helping families get ready for another great start to the school year through **Backpacks For Good** — and we'd love your help.

This year, we'll put more than 2,700 backpacks filled with school supplies into the hands of local students. That's a lot of notebooks!

Want to be part of it? There's a role for everyone. Volunteer at an event, make a donation to help fund backpacks and supplies, or help spread the word so families know where to go. Visit www.berriencommunity.org/BackpacksForGood to get started!

Backpacks For Good events:

Eau Claire Students

5-7 p.m. Thursday, July 30

Eau Claire High School/Middle School

Students Living in the 49022 ZIP Code

5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 4

Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park

Niles & Brandywine Students

4-6 p.m. Thursday, August 6

Niles High School

Coloma, Watervliet and Hagar #6 Students

4-6 p.m. Thursday, August 13

Coloma Jr. High School



BCF Awards \$585,000 in Scholarships

Students and donors came together under one roof in June for Berrien Community Foundation's annual Scholarship Celebration — a night dedicated to celebrating big dreams and the people helping make them possible.

During the event, BCF awarded \$587,500 in scholarships to 77 local students pursuing college degrees, skilled trades training and other educational opportunities. This year's Knowledge Is Power! theme, inspired by Schoolhouse Rock, highlighted how education can open doors and create opportunities.

The evening was a reminder that when a community invests in its students, everyone benefits. Congratulations to this year's scholarship recipients, and thank you to the donors who are helping students write the next chapter of their success stories!



2026 Scholars

Starting a scholarship is easy!

Call BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey to learn how.
(269) 983-3304

For Good Grants Deliver \$200,000+ in Local Impact

Berrien Community Foundation is putting more than \$200,000 to work through its latest cycle of **For Good Grants**, helping big ideas take root across Berrien County. Among the grant recipients are two playground projects that will create more inclusive places for kids of all abilities to climb, swing, explore and let their imaginations run wild — together.

In Buchanan, improvements at **Victory Park** will build on recent upgrades and create even more opportunities for the community's more than 10,000 residents to gather, play and enjoy the outdoors.

In Berrien Springs, **Wolf's Prairie Playground at Grove Park** is getting a fresh start as its 24-year-old playground is replaced with accessible swings, slides and sensory-friendly features.

Together, these projects are creating spaces where every child can join the fun and every family



Wolf's Prairie Playground at Grove Park

feels welcome.

Applications for the next round of For Good Grants are due August 1. To apply, start at www.berriencommunity.org/ForGood.

For a full list of recipients, visit www.berriencommunity.org/News.

Did You Know

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... for joint filers, a \$200 donation to Berrien Community Foundation could cost you as little as \$52 thanks to new Michigan tax incentives? It's true!

A new 2026 tax incentive allows Michigan taxpayers to receive up to a 50% state tax credit for gifts to endowed funds at Berrien Community Foundation such as BCF's Community Endowment; field of interest funds like education, youth or arts; or the specific agency endowment of your choice.

Give today: www.berriencommunity.org/OurFunds

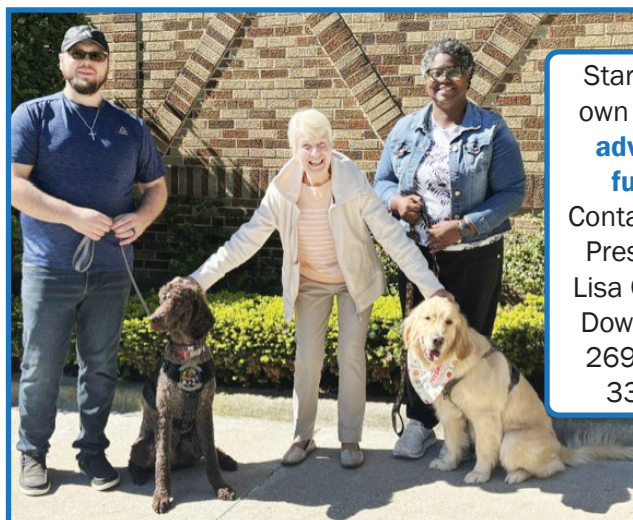
Healing, Hope and Happy Tail Wags

When Judy Felland wanted to support local veterans, she utilized her donor advised fund at Berrien Community Foundation to make a meaningful difference.

Through her generosity, two area veterans received specially trained service dogs through the Veteran Service Animal Pilot Program. Matthew Poore, a Marine Corps veteran from Coloma, was paired with Hershey while Army veteran Tammy Robinson, of Benton Harbor, was matched with Ollie.

Felland's support is personal; her late husband served in the Air Force, and she believes he may have benefited from the companionship and assistance of a service dog.

By using her donor advised fund, Felland is helping provide veterans with more than a highly trained service animal. She is helping deliver confidence, connection, and hope — one wagging tail at a time.



Judy Felland, center, pets Hershey and Ollie alongside their owners, veterans Matthew Poore and Tammy Robinson.

Start your own **donor advised fund!**

Contact BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey at 269-983-3304.

Staff News

Welcome, Quini & Denalia!

Our Berrien Community Foundation team is growing, and we couldn't be more excited to welcome two community-minded stars to the crew: **Quini McGhee**, our new scholarships and development coordinator, and **Denalia Black**, our community service intern. You can "meet" them by reading their profiles on our website or, better yet, come on in and say hi!



Quini McGhee

Quini brings experience in customer service, youth programming and community engagement, along with a genuine passion for helping others. She's eager to connect students with scholarship opportunities and encourage the next generation of changemakers across Berrien County.



Denalia Black

As part of Lake Michigan College's Learn & Earn internship program, **Denalia** is spending her summer supporting Backpacks For Good and other foundation initiatives while pursuing her nursing degree. Whether she's volunteering, playing sports or meeting new people, Denalia brings enthusiasm, compassion and a strong commitment to making a difference!

Congrats, Grad!

Congratulations to BCF Communications Manager Kelly Gampel on graduating from the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber's **Leadership Accelerator!**

Over seven months, Kelly built new skills, expanded her network and discovered fresh ways to make an impact in the workplace and community.



Matheny Honored with RESA Partnership Award

Congratulations to BCF Program Director Susan Matheny, who received a **Partnership Award** from Berrien RESA!

Susan was recognized for helping students build scholarship-writing skills and coaching staff on stronger grant writing.



Upcoming Grant Deadlines

AUGUST

8/1 - For Good Grants

OCTOBER

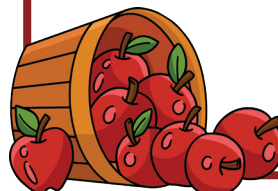
10/1 - Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants

10/1 - William J. Deputy Grants

10/15 - Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants

To apply, visit www.berriencommunity.org/grants

Save The Date! Annual Meeting & Celebration



October 7, 2026
at Lake Michigan College

invite to follow

