

Philanthropy Corner

How BCF Helps With Charitable Giving

With so many worthy organizations, urgent needs and compelling opportunities, it can be difficult to know where to start.

Berrien Community Foundation can help by serving as a trusted, knowledgeable partner in your philanthropy. Our team works closely with nonprofit organizations across the county and maintains a deep understanding of the issues shaping our community. This allows us to provide more than just options — we can offer context.

BCF can also help ensure your gifts are used effectively to do the great work you intend. Our team reviews organizations' missions and programs, and provide guidance. This can be especially helpful if you want to support a new organization or respond to an urgent need.



Whether you prefer to remain hands-on in selecting organizations or would like help narrowing your focus, our team can tailor our approach to fit your preferences and goals.

Contact BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey to talk about how you can have the greatest impact. Call us at 269-983-3304.



BERRIEN
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.™

Berrien County Gives Back

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

INSIDE: The Power of Grantmaking



Philanthropic Youth Support Curious Kids

Picking plastic apples from a wall of trees and being swallowed whole by a giant bubble is a familiar experience for many children in Southwest Michigan thanks to the 35 years of memory making at **Curious Kids Museum**.

"All the memories I have from Curious Kids' are good and very hands-on," said Andrew Layman, a student at Michigan Lutheran High School and member of **Berrien Community Foundation's youth advisory committee, T.E.A.M.** "It's important for kids to get the interactive learning and experiences they get at Curious Kids."

When asked to consider a \$15,000 **For Good Grant** for renovations at the new Curious Kids' Museum (CKM) site, T.E.A.M. (Teens Exhibiting Able Minds) saw an opportunity to do even more — so they asked BCF's board of directors to match their gift.

"The board was excited to rise to the challenge the teens presented," said Sarah Jollay, BCF board chair. "We are proud to match this grant and celebrate the leadership shown by our young philanthropists."

When CKM purchased the former Priscilla U. Byrns Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, they were happy to increase their capacity and honor the legacy of Heritage Museum benefactor, Priscilla Upton Byrns.

"My mom started her career teaching kindergarten, and that love for curiosity and imagination never left her," said Byrns' daughter Carrie Vill. "She would be so very happy to know this building will be full of

children running around, laughing and learning. She was an early supporter of the Curious Kids' Museum when it started and would, no doubt, be the same in this next chapter."

CKM Executive Director Lori Marciniak is ready to begin construction.

"We need the community's support to renovate the building and we want to do it without raising the cost of admission so that the museum is accessible for all kids to come and play," she said.

The CKM **Building Curiosity — Play a Part, Fund the Fun!** capital campaign is halfway to the \$9.2 million goal to make room for more exhibits, play stations and necessary structural changes for safety.

Work is ongoing. If you'd like to know more about this, visit www.berriencommunity.org/news.



Current TEAM member Andrew Layman, pictured here as a child playing at Curious Kids' Museum

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

MAY

5/1 - Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability

JUNE

6/1 - Low Family Foundation We See You
6/1 - Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grant
6/1 - Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community
6/9 - Heart of Cook Grant
6/15 - Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants
6/30 - Howard Youth Grant
6/30 - Howard Facilities Grant

JULY

7/1 - Carolyn's Kids Grant

To apply, visit www.berriencommunity.org/grants

SAVE THE DATE!

Berrien Community Foundation's

SCHOLARSHIP CELEBRATION

JUNE 17, 2026



Scholarship Sets the Stage for Artistic Growth

For Lakeshore High School student Cole Dalton, summer camp wasn't just a break from school — it was a turning point.

“Being able to experience the bassoon intensive at Interlochen was a life-changing experience,” Dalton said. “The **Wood Family Summer Arts Scholarship** played a tremendous role in enabling me to attend Interlochen. It has played an enormous role in paving my path for artistic success.”

Through the Wood Family Summer Arts Scholarship, **Berrien Community Foundation helps remove financial barriers** for local students pursuing summer arts programs that strengthen their skills and confidence. The scholarship supports a wide range of disciplines, including music, dance, visual arts and theater, giving young artists the opportunity to focus on learning and creativity.

BCF is currently accepting applications for the upcoming summer season. Students may apply at www.berriencommunity.org/WoodFamilyArtsScholarship. Applications are due by April 30.



Cole Dalton



← Apply Now!



The Power of Grantmaking

What happens when generous dollars meet great ideas? Real change. BCF grants help local organizations tackle community needs, launch creative solutions and make a lasting impact. Below are some recent stories of how **For Good Grant** dollars are being put to work across Berrien County.



Power of Teachers

Berrien RESA opens new chapters for students with cognitive impairments by strengthening reading instruction. A BCF grant fueled professional development and classroom resources for 30 special education teachers, reaching nearly 300 students. Teachers say the learning has been a game-changer — sparking new approaches that build student success and brighter futures.



Power of Connectivity

Berrien County Cancer Service delivers compassion and care straight to the doorsteps of neighbors facing cancer. A BCF grant helps provide skilled in-home nursing, medical supplies, equipment and nutritional support for patients who cannot access or afford traditional home health services.



Power of Community

Buchanan Area Senior Center energizes healthy aging with a refreshed fitness room. A BCF grant replaced worn equipment and added a full-body biometric scanner so members can track their fitness progress. The results are exciting! According to the director, the room has inspired those hard-to-reach seniors to get healthy and enjoy the center.

Low Family Foundation Invests \$150,000 in the Community

A new BCF partner, **the Joseph & Rosemary Low Family Foundation**, awarded \$150,000 to nonprofits who enrich communities through education, culture and care.

The four major grants were awarded to:

- Fernwood Botanical Garden - \$50,000
- Chicago History Museum - \$50,000
- WNIT Public Television - \$25,000
- Humane Society of Southwest Michigan - \$25,000



**JOSEPH & ROSEMARY
LOW FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

“In these challenging times, the Low Family Foundation is honored to support these organizations for the impact they make in their community,” said Dr. John N. Low, chair of the Low Family Foundation.

The foundation's giving reflects the values of its founders — Joseph, Wilma and Rosemary Low — whose lives of service inspired a lasting commitment to philanthropy. With Berrien Community Foundation's administrative support, philanthropic expertise and deep knowledge of local needs, that mission is positioned to endure for generations.

Apply Now For LFF's We See You Grant

Nonprofits are invited to apply for the Low Family Foundation's \$5,000 **We See You Grant**, which celebrates the incredible work happening every day in and around Berrien County.

Applications are open now through June 1 at www.berriencommunity.org/lowfoundation.

Teen Voices Wanted: Join BCF's Youth Advisory Council

BCF's T.E.A.M. (Teens Exhibiting Able Minds) is now accepting applications for new members! Share this with any teen you know wanting to make a difference!

T.E.A.M. is a great opportunity to build leadership skills, give back to the community, and be part of a fun, driven group of peers.

Visit www.berriencommunity.org/team to learn more or apply. Applications are due by July 15, but will be reviewed on a rolling basis.



T.E.A.M. members had a blast seeing their For Good Grant in action — they funded new tubes for the sledding hill at Five Pines for the community to enjoy during the winter months! Pictured at left is: Hank, Connor, Logan, Andrew, Charlie, Chase and McKaylen.