



BERRIEN
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.™

Berrien County Gives Back

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023



Beach Cruisin’

The grant request from Berrien County Parks to the Berrien Community Foundation’s **For Good Grants** was fairly simple – they needed funds for a new beach wheelchair. The county had two beach wheelchairs that had become brittle and were not able to be fixed. Berrien County Parks Director Jill Adams wanted to people in wheelchairs to enjoy the beach and decided to try for a grant.

For Judy Felland, providing the community with access to a beach wheelchair was personal – she and her husband were in a car crash that left him in a wheelchair.

“My husband, Doug, was in a wheelchair for 30 years,” Judy said. “We would travel in a van across the U.S. We could see lakes and beaches but could only look at them. He couldn’t experience it.”

The new beach wheelchair will go through the sand and is also able to go into the water, a feature Judy said will be wonderful for people in wheelchairs.

When BCF receives grant applications from nonprofit organizations, we share them with our

Donor Advised Fund holders so they can see if there are needs they would like to fill through their Donor Advised Fund (D.A.F.). A D.A.F. is a charitable giving fund established by a family or individual that allows them to make one larger donation into the fund and then direct grants from the fund to a variety of charities over time.

The beach wheelchair was also meaningful to Steve & Pam Klyn, who helped fund the purchase through their Donor Advised Fund.

“One of the reasons we feel so lucky to call Southwest Michigan home is the access to so many amazing outdoor spaces,” Pam Klyn said. “We are happy to support this initiative which will provide the opportunity for easier beach access to individuals who may not have been able to enjoy this in the past.”

Choosing which projects to fund can be tricky when there are so many needs. But, as Judy said, sometimes you just know.

“Certain things touch my heart,” she said. “I read about this and it was automatic. I just knew.”

Gotcha Doin' Good, Kyle and Ron!

Kyle's heart for dogs is about as big as they come. After the passing of his beloved pooch, Kyle noticed a dog needing some shelter, so he built a dog house in memory of his old best friend. Then, he saw another dog in need and built one more. But it didn't stop there — Kyle has built more than 1,200 dog houses now! He freely gives them away and each is marked with a paw print on the roof in honor of his old companion.



Caring Cupboard volunteer Ron Gallert brings his own “air traffic batons” every month to help direct traffic at Feeding America West Michigan’s mobile food pantry at Woodland Shores Baptist Church. When you have dozens of cars lining up, this is a huge help! The person who nominated Ron called him “dependable” and “terrific” — and we think so, too!

Do you know someone doing good in Berrien County? Help us recognize them!
Nominate them for our Gotcha Doin' Good feature to celebrate acts of kindness in our community by scanning the QR code or visiting www.berriencommunity.org/GotchaDoinGood



Building Blocks of Life

More than 70 students are headed to the classroom knowing Berrien Community Foundation and its scholarship donors support them. The foundation awarded \$368,000 at the Scholarship Celebration on June 15 at Grand Upton Hall at Lake Michigan College.

This year's theme, “Building Blocks of Life,” celebrated the next step in many students' lives: going off to college.

“College is so expensive,” said Berrien Community Foundation President Lisa Cripps-Downey. “Thanks to our generous donors, we can celebrate these students and help them on their journeys.”

To read the names of scholarship recipients, head on over to www.berriencommunity.org/news



Take a look at this group! We celebrated more than 70 of our scholars June 15 at Grand Upton Hall!



Backpacks FOR GOOD

Berrien Community Foundation is excited to bring **Backpacks For Good** to **FOUR** communities this year! The school readiness events focus on preparing K-12 students for the school year by giving away backpacks full of school supplies they may need! We'll also have community resources and a food pantry there as well.

Students Who Live In The 49022 ZIP Code:

Tuesday, August 1, 5 – 8 p.m. at the 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 Eau Claire Schools:

Thursday, August 3, 4 – 6 p.m. at Lybrook Elementary School parking lot. This event is open to students attending Eau Claire Public Schools, regardless of the ZIP Code in which they live.

Students Attending Brandywine or Niles Schools:

Thursday, August 10, 4 – 6 p.m. at 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 17, 4 – 6 p.m. at 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.

T.E.A.M.ing Together

Being encouraged and empowered to make a difference in their communities was the cornerstone message for BCF T.E.A.M. members at Council of Michigan Foundations' Youth Grantmakers Summer Leadership Conference in June.

T.E.A.M. — which stands for “Teens Exhibiting Able Minds” — members are the voice for youth in Berrien County. They review grant applications and make funding recommendations, volunteer in service projects throughout the county, and create calls to action for projects that affect youth locally.



At left, T.E.A.M. members Josie Balkan and Lauren Laws, and T.E.A.M. leader and BCF Program Officer Christian Hurdle.

Food For Good

Food insecurity has significantly increased these last few years. In response, Berrien Community Foundation and several community partners created the **Food For Good Fund** to address the local food gap.

The first action of the initiative directs a total of \$36,000 from the **Food For Good Fund** to eight traditional food pantries throughout Berrien County.

“We spoke with many of our local food pantries and heard about the recent increase in need for food,” said Berrien Community Foundation Program Director Susan Matheny. “This initiative is a way to provide help immediately while we work toward further solutions to address food insecurity.”

The foundation also issued a \$20,000 community challenge to meet the anticipated funding gap Feeding America West Michigan (FAWM) is likely to experience this year. Because of increased food prices and supply chain issues, FAWM anticipates a \$40,000 funding gap for their Berrien County mobile food pantry programs that provide fresh food in neighborhoods throughout the county.

What does food insecurity look like in Berrien County? Fourteen percent of the population is food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. Food banks like FAWM and their partners are facing difficulties meeting increasing need. Last year, to provide for their entire service area, FAWM purchased 1.1 million pounds of food, a 96% increase from 2021, and spent over \$1 million on food, a 134% increase from 2021. Hunger-relief organizations across Michigan are facing similar challenges acquiring enough food to meet the need for charitable food assistance.

“This is a basic human need,” BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey said. “We need to step up and help our neighbors.”

To donate, visit www.berriencommunity.org/FoodForGood or mail checks to Berrien Community Foundation, 2900 S. State Street, STE 2E, St. Joseph, MI 49085 and reference Food For Good.



Upcoming Deadlines

September 15
Howard Facilities Grant

September 15
Howard Youth Grant

September 30
For Good Grants

October 15
Frederick S. Upton
Foundation Grants

Save The Date

BCF's Annual Meeting & Celebration
Wednesday, September 20 @ Grand Upton Hall
More details to come!