



**BERRIEN**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For Good. For Ever.™

# Berrien County Gives Back

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024

**INSIDE: Standout Volunteers**



## And the Grant Goes to ...

BCF celebrated a year of bringing innovative solutions to Berrien County at our 72nd Annual Meeting & Celebration in September. And, **we awarded \$269,000 in grants in less than two hours!**

We announced the **BCF/Emerge Micro-Loan** program with Emerge Innovation Hub to offer loans to local entrepreneurs. This is the first initiative in Berrien Community Foundation's **Local Impact Investing** (also known as Program Related Investing) efforts. You can read more about this inside!

We shared the exciting news of the brand new pilot program **BCF Scholar Urgent Needs Fund** that helps current Berrien Community Foundation scholars who are at risk of dropping out of college when faced with unexpected financial hardships.

The major highlights of the night were announcing the recipients of the **Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability Grant, Carolyn's Kids grant, The Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant, Golden Acorn Volunteer Award and Golden Acorn Excellence Award!**

### Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant



*Emerge Innovation Hub to support their Catalyst Project, empowering minority business owners to grow their companies. Pictured are Love Your Community grant review committee member Mike Upton and Emerge's president, Andrew Robinson.*

### Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability Grant



*Court Appointed Special Advocates of Southwest Michigan (CASA) to invest in the mental health of staff and volunteers by providing training, consulting and coaching on secondary traumatic stress and burnout prevention. Pictured are BCF Board Secretary Ray Lipscomb and CASA Executive Director Kate Rendell.*

### Carolyn's Kids



*Tri County Head Start received \$50,000 to transform their current play area into a nature-inspired playground. Pictured are Maureen Ovington, Arthur Havlicek, Brian Saxton and Carolyn Hanson.*



*Boys and Girls Club received \$50,000 for their career training and exploration program, Workforce Development Framework. Pictured are Carolyn Hanson and Alloyd Blackmon.*



*First Congregational Church received \$40K for their Bear Packs weekend meals program. Pictured are Beth Kenagy and Carolyn Hanson and Cathy Schalk.*

# Outstanding Work

Berrien Community Foundation recognized one nonprofit and two community members for their standout work over the past year. The 2024 **Golden Acorn Award for Excellence** was awarded to **Neighbor By Neighbor** for their compassion and care for senior citizens living in Harbor Country. Neighbor By Neighbor got creative in helping low-income senior citizens stay safely in their homes through the “Help to Home” program. “Help to Home” does small home repairs for low-income seniors who are struggling to stay in and maintain their homes. Neighbor By Neighbor received a \$13,000 grant as part of the award. The increase was thanks to a grant from the Bonnie Benson Endowment Fund.



Neighbor by Neighbor Program and Grant Director Jen Bomar is caught by surprise as Berrien Community Foundation Board Director Phil Molloy changes the amount on a check to \$13,000.



Steven Thames III

Berrien Springs High School student Steven Thames received a **BCF Golden Acorn Volunteer Award** after spending countless hours helping with the **BCF Backpacks for Good** program this summer. He moved backpacks and school supplies from location to location, and hauled, counted, loaded and unloaded backpacks and other school supplies. Thank you, Steven!



Nancy Teutsch

Nancy Teutsch received a **BCF Golden Acorn Volunteer Award** as the leader of the Pink Hat Ladies who work constantly to improve the lives of those in Coloma. The Pink Hat Ladies — who wear pink and are 30+ women strong — fundraise for local causes such as: the Coloma splash pad, Hope Resources, Readiness Center and Coloma Trunk or Treat. Thank you for your leadership, Nancy!

## Did you know?

Recipients of the **Golden Acorn Volunteer Award** receive a **\$1,000 grant** to go to a charity of their choice!

## \$20 Funds a Senior Care Kit

Just \$20 sends a **Senior Care Kit** to a vulnerable, homebound senior citizen in Berrien County.

One in 10 Berrien County seniors are living below the poverty level and, when out-of-pocket medical costs are factored in, that statistic turns into 1 in 7. To help bring some financial relief, we provide basic hygiene and care items in the form of these kits. We do also add some fun things like adult puzzle books and candy!

Every year, we hear from seniors expressing their gratitude to us, you and those who've financially contributed. Some tell us they wait to unwrap their kit until Christmas morning as it's the only present they receive.

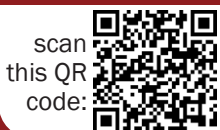
While \$20 covers the cost to send one Senior Care Kit, donations of all sizes are appreciated!

I feel real blessed to have friends like you. I don't know what I did to deserve this. You all are so wonderful!

— Cleo



### How To Donate



Visit [www.berriencommunity.org/SeniorCareKits](http://www.berriencommunity.org/SeniorCareKits)

Stop by our office with cash or check  
2900 S. State St., Ste 2E  
St. Joseph, MI

Interested in volunteering to pack **Senior Care Kits**? Stay tuned! We'll post on social media and will send out an e-newsletter when sign ups open.



Photos of local entrepreneurs participating in events at Emerge Innovation Hub. The **BCF/Emerge Micro-Loan** program is the first initiative in BCF's **Local Impact Investing** efforts.

## Investing Here through Local Impact Investing

Berrien Community Foundation has set aside \$500,000 for **Local Impact Investing** (also known as Program Related Investing) to invest in local initiatives. These investments, made in the form of low interest loans, can be made to **for-profit or nonprofit organizations** as long as the primary purpose of the investment is a social benefit to our community.

“Housing, day care, placemaking, opportunities for employment – Local Impact Investing is a way to invest

right here in Berrien County,” said BCF President Lisa Cripps-Downey.

Special consideration is given to endeavors that focus on job creation, social and environmental benefit, and economic growth in the community. Programs that use local contractors and materials and DEI indicators are also considered.

For more information or to apply, visit [www.berriencommunity.org/PRI](http://www.berriencommunity.org/PRI).

## Helping Students Break Down Barriers

For some college students, an unexpected financial hardship could stand in the way from completing a semester or even graduating from college.

Berrien Community Foundations launched the **BCF Scholar Urgent Needs Scholarship Fund** this year to aid high-priority students overcome these financial hurdles.

Through a partnership with local donors and a donation from the Baird Wealth Management Charity Golf Outing, the fund will help students “when life happens.”

“There are students who are making ends meet, working, going to class, paying rent and then an unexpected expense comes up, and they don’t have enough at the end of the month to buy food,” explained BCF Program Director Susan Matheny. “Or their car breaks down and they can’t afford to get it fixed so they can get to class. That is



2024 Scholars

when the **BCF Scholar Urgent Needs Scholarship Fund** could kick in. Students who received a scholarship in 2024 will be eligible for urgent needs funding when life just happens.”

If you would like to donate to this fund or to find out more information, please visit [www.berriencommunity.org/UrgentNeedsFund](http://www.berriencommunity.org/UrgentNeedsFund).

# Welcome to the team!

BCF welcomed Tanya Hagen to the team at the beginning of October.

She is the office administrator and will likely be the first person you see when visiting our offices!

Tanya comes to BCF from Whole Foods Market as a team trainer. She's also been a development director at a Montessori school, corporate marketer and did a stint in B2B telecommunications.

When asked what makes her excited to work at BCF, she said, "I love being able to make a difference in our community and finding ways to support and meet community-specific needs."

Outside of the office, Tanya can often be found with a camera in hand at a sporting event. Her family is immersed in everything baseball and attends her sons' soccer and baseball games. She also enjoys a quiet evening in with her two boxer dogs, Max and Bryzzo.



# Welcome Back!

School is back in session, which means BCF's Teens Exhibiting Able Minds (T.E.A.M.) members are ready for an academic year full of philanthropic endeavors!

"We are so excited to launch a new year of T.E.A.M.," said T.E.A.M. chair Lindsey Salmon. "We have lots of amazing service projects planned for this year, including developing an Adulting 101 event to help students learn important life skills."

There are about two dozen teens from across Berrien County who are on BCF's youth advisory committee this year.

If you know a teen who might be interested in joining, visit [www.berriencommunity.org/TEAM](http://www.berriencommunity.org/TEAM) for more information!



T.E.A.M. members at their first meeting of the school year.

## Upcoming Grant Deadlines

**Howard Facilities Grant** — November 1

**Howard Youth Grant** — November 1

**William J. Deputy Grant** — December 1

To apply, visit [www.berriencommunity.org/grants](http://www.berriencommunity.org/grants)

## Holiday Schedule

BCF will be closed on the following days during the holiday season:

November 28 - 29

December 24 - 25

January 1