



BERRIEN
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

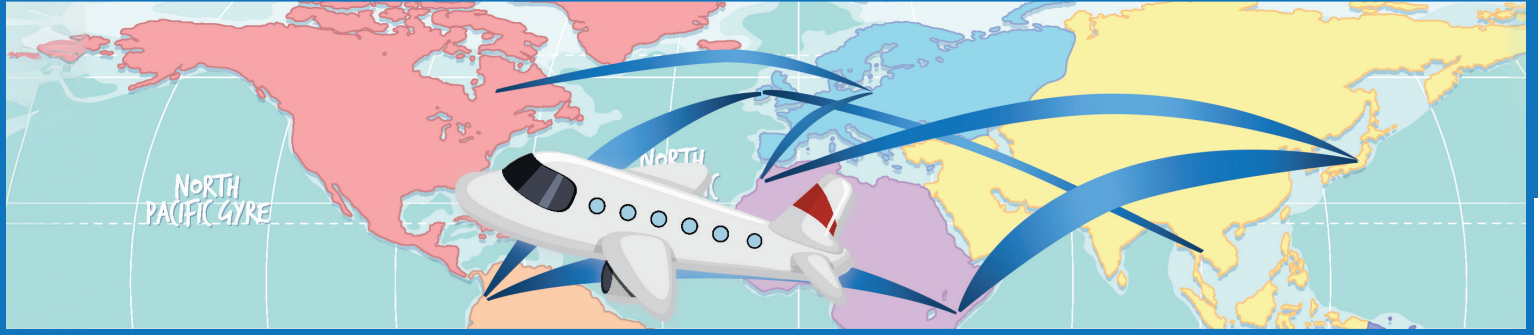
For Good. For Ever.SM

Berrien County Gives Back

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025

INSIDE: Senior Care Kits Bring Holiday Cheer



And Away We Go!

A **For Good Grant** will help gently transport people with dementia and their caregivers to places like Morocco, Ireland and Kenya all the while remaining safely inside the Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library.

Travel Tales is a program developed to stimulate cognitive abilities of those with dementia and Alzheimer's as they "travel" to different countries – experiencing sights, sounds, food and folklore of the culture.

Assistant library director Zack North said receiving a For Good Grant from Berrien Community Foundation is reaffirming and validating because "this was a service gap for us and we're really excited to fill it and bring a whole new group of people to the library and connect them with resources."

In Berrien County, 12.5% of residents aged 65 and older have dementia – triple the national average according to the CDC's 2004 study. This population is often underserved.

Library staff expressed gratitude to BCF in supporting their new initiative, which has opened their eyes to the great need in the county.

Travels Tales will run once a month, February through November, except for June and July. Library staff will lead each session and offer ways for caregivers and those with dementia to bond.

Travels Tales is a free program open to the public,



BCF Program Officer Sharnae Hudson, center, presents Maud Preston Library staff, from left, Lisa, the volunteer, outreach and marketing coordinator; Zack North, assistant library director; and Paula Stakley, library director, for their project "Travel Tales."

regardless of residency or membership. Registration is not required.

"My hope for this program is that we build a greater sense of connection between both the caregiver and the individual with Alzheimer's," said Zack. "Connectedness is a huge part of what we as libraries do. We hope we can create an environment that is stimulating, comforting and allows people to walk away with something new that they otherwise would not have experienced."

First stop on the itinerary: Japan.

All are invited to join the journey at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, February 11 at Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library. For more information, visit the library's website at www.youseemore.com/maudpreston.

Senior Care Kits Bring Holiday Cheer

“This is like Christmas to me,” Jean said, gazing at all the items in her **Senior Care Kit** from Berrien Community Foundation.

This is the second year Jean and Gerald have received one of the gift-wrapped care packages. She added they always pick up the lotion right away as it’s one of their favorite items in the jam-packed gift.

Gerald and Jean are two of the 1,100 senior citizens around Berrien County who received a Senior Care Kit from BCF. The Foundation partners with Meals on Wheels, Neighbor By Neighbor and Area Agency on Aging to reach low-income, homebound and in-need seniors.

Before the Senior Care Kits made their way into the homes and hands of seniors, the community showed up to help count, sort, pack and assemble. More than 100 families answered BCF’s call to take home and assemble 10 kits in a week’s time. Prior to that, volunteer groups counted and sorted first aid kit items, sorted tissue paper, divided candy into small baggies and so much more.

The Lester & Barbara Page Sr. Endowment Fund at Berrien Community Foundation helps to fund this project along with support from Corewell Health Foundation, Frederick S. Upton Foundation, Heart of Cook Foundation, Honor Credit Union and private donations.



Gerald and Jean, above, begin to open their Senior Care Kit. Benny, at left, is all smiles receiving his gift from an Area Agency on Aging delivery volunteer!



Why Senior Care Kits?

- 1 in 10 Berrien County seniors are living below the poverty level.
- When out-of-pocket medical costs are factored in, 1 in 7 are below the poverty level.
- Every day, seniors are forced to choose between medicine, food or basic care items.

How You Can Help:

Scan this QR code to donate:



Visit

www.berriencommunity.org/SeniorCareKits

Scholarship Applications Due Soon

Berrien Community Foundation’s scholarship application is available online, but the deadline to apply is fast approaching. All students pursuing a college education or careers in the skilled trades are encouraged to apply!

Deadline is February 1, 2025. Apply at www.berriencommunity.org/scholar.

There are scholarships for adults returning to the classroom, current college students, those going into the skilled trades and graduating high school seniors.

New to the BCF family of scholarships this year is the **Brian Swiger Memorial Scholarship**. Established in 1996 by Twin City Players in memory of former TCP member Brian Swiger, this scholarship (up to \$1,500) is earmarked for seniors graduating from Berrien County high schools who have demonstrated a strong interest in theater-related activities during their academic careers. Recipients, however, can use the award money to pursue any field of study at any accredited college, university, trade school or arts education institution.



2024 Scholars

Applications Are Due February 1

1 Application = 50+ Opportunities!

Apply online at www.berriencommunity.org/scholar





For Good Grant Winner Ramps Up Accessibility

Disability Network Southwest Michigan (DNSWM), received a **Berrien Community Foundation For Good Grant** recently. They will use funding to build ramps for people who have a mobility impairment.

“People who reach out to DNSWM for a ramp often say they feel ‘trapped’ in their homes and have great difficulty leaving them to go to medical appointments, church, shopping or even to spend time outside,” said BCF Program Director Susan Matheny. “BCF’s For Good Grant will build ramps that help DNSWM and their volunteers transform what was once a barrier into a path for independence.”

Because of the For Good Grant, up to nine ADA-compliant ramps will be built in Berrien County, dependent on material cost.



Disability Network Southwest Michigan volunteers and licensed tradesmen build dozens of ramps every year. A single ramp can cost between \$2,200-\$3,200, dependent on material costs.

Deadline to apply for the next round of For Good Grants is April 1. To apply or for more information, visit www.berriencommunity.org/forgood.

T.E.A.M. Bulletin

Valentine’s Day may not be until next month, but love was in the air as BCF’s T.E.A.M. (Teens Exhibiting Able Minds) group members assembled Valentine’s Day care kits at their January meeting. Packed full of candy, cocoa and some silly holiday treats (think bubble wands and squishy balls), these kits will be mailed out both locally and nationwide to 60 of our 2024 BCF scholarship recipients to remind them that BCF continues to support them on their educational journey.



A small group of T.E.A.M. members braved winter weather to assemble valentine care packages for BCF scholars.



Welcome, Sharnae!

Sharnae Hudson recently joined Berrien Community Foundation as its new program officer.

Sharnae's work centers on administrative side of facilitating grants and scholarship at BCF by handling grant agreements, scholarship applications, answering questions about both programs and much more!

"I'm happy to be working at a nonprofit again," Sharnae said. "The kindness you encounter and the people you help in this area of work is so heartwarming and rewarding."

Prior to joining BCF, she worked at Relief Chiropractic and Wellness Center as a business manager. She also has worked at Benton Harbor Charter School Academy as the community liaison and office manager.

When not at work, Hudson enjoys volunteering for community service projects, spending time with family and swimming at the YMCA.

To learn more about Sharnae, read her bio online at www.berriencommunity.org/staff.



Grants At A Glance

BCF puts together an informational sheet each year that lists grant opportunities and deadlines. This handy dandy cheat sheet can be found at www.berriencommunity.org/grants. But here's a snapshot of deadlines for this year:

March

15th - Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants

April

1st - For Good Grants

1st - BIG IDEA Grant from the Frederick S. Upton Foundation

May

1st - Alamar Nonprofit Sustainability Grant

June

1st - Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants

1st - Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant

9th - Heart of Cook Foundation

15th - Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants

July

1st - Carolyn's Kids Grants

2nd - Heart of Cook Grants

October

1st - For Good Grants

15th - Frederick S. Upton Foundation Grants

November

1st - Howard Facilities Grants

1st - Howard Youth Grant

December

1st - Golden Acorn Classroom Mini Grants

1st - William J. Deputy Grants