



The Black Belt Community Foundation

DATA IMPACT CENTER

The Black Belt Bulletin

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Black Belt Arts Initiative

The Black Belt region is known for its rich artistic and cultural heritage, which is a source of pride and economic opportunity for the communities and people the Black Belt Community Foundation serves. The BBCF has always been a strong advocate for Arts in the region and remains committed to strengthening community engagement with exposure



to arts experiences through its grantmaking. By partnering with the Youth & Cultural Committee of the Black Belt Action Commission and the Alabama State Council on the Arts, BBCF helped to establish the Black Belt Arts Initiative (BBAI), which has distributed over **\$1.7 million** in arts grants throughout the region since its inception in 2006!

In many cases, the BBAI Arts Grants are the critical lifeline that sustains many K-12 public school Arts programs in the Black Belt against a constant backdrop of dwindling funds and budget cuts. According to a (2018) report from the Alabama Artistic Literacy Consortium, nearly 76% of students in rural Alabama have little or no access to Arts education opportunities. "We know that there is a gap. When I think about it, it seems like [Arts] funding has been cut for so long that I don't know [whether] it's the first thing to get cut anymore—it's just not been there," BBCF President Felecia Lucky said.

This is the case in Greene County where students in public schools rarely get to engage in theater or choir activities. The Center for Rural Family Development (CFRD) in Eutaw, Alabama is working to change that for the passionate local high school students who wouldn't otherwise have an avenue to the fine arts. Through funding from a 2022 BBAI Arts Grant, the CFRD was able to cast and produce an original three-act stage play and musical which was performed by local high students at the Black Belt Folks Roots Festival last summer.

Another past BBAI Arts Grant recipient is ArtsRevive, in Dallas County whose guiding principle is a belief art can be an opportunity-maker for communities and individuals alike. The previous Arts Grant awards have been used to help fund their annual Photographic Nights of Selma Festival, an event where photographers across the globe come to Selma to highlight photography and its universal power as an art form. Indeed, in terms of the affective reach of the festival ArtsRevive Director, Becky Youngblood has previously stated, "It's always fun to see the children [in Dallas County] interact with and have the opportunity to be around people that they otherwise would never have met...they would have never run into a famed photographer from France just in their everyday life unless we brought them to Selma."

With over 17 years of grant awards and partnerships in the region's vibrant Arts community, the BBCF proudly announces its **2023 Arts Grant Cycle**. Community-based organizations from Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, and Wilcox counties are encouraged to apply. Please contact Jennifer McCohnell at jmccohnell@blackbeltfound.org for more information about the application process and/or required workshops.



The Freedom Quilting Bee Legacy group in Wilcox County received a 2022 Arts Grant which allowed them to provide a 3-part 'Tours of Museums' Day Trip Series for members of the community. Pictured above is FQB Legacy Board Member, Minnie Williams, during a tour of the Birmingham Museum of Art where they saw an original Freedom Quilting Bee quilt on display.



The Community Foundation of Uniontown also received a 2022 Arts Grant for a community mural project that was recently completed (March 2023). Designed by Uniontown resident artist, Jason Irvin, the mural allowed the community to tell its own story and history in a way that is meaningful to them.



2019 BBCF Arts grantees gathered in Selma during the last in-person Arts Grants Awards ceremony. 2023 represents the first year BBCF is able to return to an in-person event!

Sources: montgomeryadvertiser.com (5/19/22 & 4/18/23); perrycountyherald.net (3/6/23); einpresswire.com (5/16/22); arts.govimpact/state-profiles/alabama; artsactionfund.org/

Alabama Arts Facts: The Arts & Culture Sector

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis & National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2023 (2021 data collected during the pandemic)



CONTRIBUTES
\$5.4B
TO THE STATE'S ECONOMY



REPRESENTS
2.1%
OF THE STATE'S GDP



SUPPORTS
43,981
JOBS IN THE STATE

