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DONOR IMPACT REPORT

# COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund

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The Denver Foundation

# IMPACT UPDATE

*The COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund, brought foundations and donors together to support a vital, struggling industry.*



Huge. Life-saving. Essential. Heartwarming. Significant. Those are just a few of the adjectives area nonprofits have used to describe the impact of the \$2 million COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund, an innovative, cross-sector collaboration led by The Denver Foundation and Bonfils-Stanton Foundation.

For many cash-strapped organizations, the ongoing shutdown not only has limited the work they can do. It has limited the work they can do for others. But the COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund has helped at least 72 groups stay on track.

Take, for example, the Filipino-American Community of Colorado, which preserves and shares Filipino heritage and through classes including music, language, and art. General operating support through the fund allowed the organization to keep the doors of its building open, rather than going into dormancy as many arts and culture groups have been forced to do since the shutdown.

Though the amount the FACC received through the relief fund was relatively small, at \$6,000, it was essential to the all-volunteer group with a 67-year-old building to maintain.

“We are very grateful,” said Chona Palmon, Chair of the FACC’s board. “Knowing there are foundations like these is so important to an organization like ours where every penny counts. And the fact that we were able to utilize these funds to help the community at large is even more heartwarming.”

Through the COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund more than \$2 million has been distributed to 72 nonprofit organizations across Metro Denver in two rounds of funding (July 2020 and February 2021). Grant awards in each funding cycle ranged from \$5,000 to \$50,000, but many organizations benefited from support in both rounds.

Metro Denver’s arts-and-culture sector, which is so important to our community, was especially damaged by



# \$2M+

Grant Funds Distributed

# 70

Contributions from  
Individual Donors

# 96

Grants to Arts & Culture  
Organizations Across  
Metro Denver

# 72

Organizations Received Grants

the impact of COVID,” says Gary Steur, President and CEO, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. “Groups experienced an almost complete shutdown of all programming, resulting in massive revenue loss and layoffs or furloughs of thousands of workers. And since many artists also make ends meet through work in the hospitality sector, which was also severely hurt by the shutdown, the impact on them was two-fold. The COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund provided an absolutely crucial lifeline, allowing organizations to keep themselves and their workforces afloat. Many used these resources to deliver excellent virtual programming and are now ready to re-emerge with the rich, inspiring programming our communities need.

“The COVID-19 Arts & Culture Fund was a remarkable example of what can happen when foundations, city governments, and generous people come together to create solutions and address challenges collectively,” says Javier Alberto Soto, President and CEO of The Denver Foundation. “We are enormously grateful to everyone

*“It helps so much knowing that The Denver Foundation and Bonfils-Stanton Foundation are leaders in innovative arts funding in this state and have demonstrated such a strong commitment to the arts community.”*

**MICAH GARCIA DE BENAVIDEZ,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, SU TEATRO CULTURAL  
AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**



who supported this fund. With your help, the arts-and-culture sector came through the crisis, and will now play an important role in our community's recovery."

In addition to Bonfils-Stanton Foundation and The Denver Foundation, supporters of the fund include Denver Arts & Venues, the City of Boulder, Create Boulder, The Colorado Health Foundation, the Gates Family Foundation, and dozens of generous individuals and donor-advised fundholders.

The organizations that received the largest total grant dollars from the COVID-19 Relief Fund are the Art Students League of Denver, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center, Denver March Powwow, and the Curious Theatre Company. The \$50,000 that went to Pop Culture Classroom was especially needed given that the educational programming contributor to FAN EXPO Denver recently lost all of its revenue from ComicCon.

The \$80,000 received by Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center represents about one-sixth of the company's operational budget, said Managing Director Mica Garcia de Benavidez. Su Teatro, which offers a variety of programming that includes a theatre season, Chicano Music Festival, Film Fest, WordFest, and educational programs, will begin celebrating its 50th year this August.

"During COVID, \$80,000 represents two months of operating expenses," said Garcia de Benavidez. "It makes a huge difference when you don't have to hustle just to keep the lights on. These funds put us in a position where we could continue to work toward our future instead of having to worry about the present. It helps so much knowing that The Denver Foundation and Bonfils-Stanton Foundation are leaders in innovative arts funding in this state and have demonstrated such a strong commitment to the arts community."

Warm Cookies of the Revolution — which describes itself like a gym, only it's where you go to exercise your civic

health — received \$25,000. "On a practical side," said Founder Evan Weissman, "it's kind of life-saving. It's very, very helpful."

But at a time like this, he added, there is something deeper at play. When foundations combine forces along with individual donors, it sends a powerful message to the nonprofit community.

"This relief fund shows that these foundations are really walking the walk," Weissman said. "I feel like it's so easy for arts and culture funding to be cut and just diminished in general. This feels very supportive."

Warm Cookies is making the most of the opportunity. In the absence of live events, the group has focused on publishing; it has three books coming out this year. Warm Cookies is still delivering on its mission during the pandemic, "but it's difficult," Weissman said, "and if we didn't have this support, we would be more on the dormant side."

And when you are a nonprofit's only paid staff member, with a family to support, dormant is not an option. The future, Weissman warned, will not solve itself as soon as these non-profits get the all-clear to resume normal operations. There is no normal, and reserve funds are severely depleted.

"The general feeling is that the next couple years might feel even harder," Weissman said. "There is going to be so much philanthropic intention directed toward essential human services that it's going to be hard for arts groups to get much attention. So I'm hoping efforts like this collaboration between major foundations is something they can continue."

**PHOTOS** (Cover) Larissa No Braid, Coordinator of Denver March Powwow. Photo by Miss Grace. (Page 2) Photo of traditional Aztec dancers by Juan Fuentes, from *We Trust Our Wings*, a forthcoming book from Warm Cookies of the Revolution. (Page 4) Left: "Mira," by Mel Aman, from "Art Strut: Women in Their Infinite Forms," from the Athena Project. Right: Cultural dancers of the Filipino American Association of Colorado. (Page 5) A mural by Javier Flores and artists from Access Gallery based on Pablo Picasso's "Guernica." All five organizations received funding through the COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund.

# GRANTEES

Access Gallery  
 Art from Ashes  
 Art Students League of Denver  
 Athena Project  
 Ballet Ariel  
 Black American West Museum & Heritage Center  
 Boulder Bach Festival  
 Boulder Ballet  
 Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company  
 Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art  
 BuCu West  
 Centro Cultural Mexicano  
 Chicano Humanities and Arts Council Inc.  
 Children's Museum of Denver  
 Cleo Parker Robinson Dance  
 CMDance  
 Colorado Ballet Company  
 Colorado Celebration of African American  
 Arts & Culture  
 Colorado MusicFestival and Center for Musical Arts  
 Colorado Youth Symphony Orchestras  
 Control Group Productions  
 Curious Theatre Company  
 Curls On The Block  
 D3 Arts  
 Dairy Arts Center  
 David Taylor's Zikr Dance Ensemble  
 Denver Art Society  
 Denver Children's Choir  
 Denver Film Society  
 Denver March Powwow  
 Downtown Aurora Visual Arts  
 Ethiopian Community Television  
 Filipino-American Community of Colorado  
 Firehouse Art Center

Flamenco Fantasy Theatre  
 Friends of Levitt Pavilion Denver  
 Gift of Jazz  
 Greater Boulder Youth Orchestras  
 The Hadanou Collective  
 Harmony A Colorado Chorale  
 KGNU  
 Kim Robards Dance, Inc.  
 Latino Cultural Arts Center  
 Lemon Sponge Cake Contemporary Ballet  
 LOCAL THEATER COMPANY  
 Magic Moments  
 Mirror Image Arts  
 Morrison Theatre Company/Miners Alley Playhouse  
 Motus Theater  
 Museo de las Americas  
 Museum of Contemporary Art Denver  
 Open Media Foundation  
 OpenArts  
 Ovation West Performing Arts  
 Phamaly Theatre Company  
 PlatteForum  
 Pop Culture Classroom  
 Post 1 Foundation  
 RedLine Contemporary Arts Center  
 Rocky Mountain Arts Association  
 Rocky Ridge Music Center  
 Roshni  
 Street Wise Arts  
 Studio Arts Boulder  
 Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center  
 Swallow Hill Music Association  
 Think 360 Arts for Learning  
 Vintage Theatre Productions  
 Vocal Coalition  
 Warm Cookies of the Revolution  
 The Word: A Storytelling Sanctuary  
 Youth on Record



We thank the COVID-19  
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 SUZI Q SMITH  
 GARY STEUER  
 TINA WALLS

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CHONA PALMON, CHAIR.  
FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY  
OF COLORADO, CHAIR



The Denver  
Foundation

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