

Local



Give Big Kern, an online fundraiser to support local nonprofits, lasts from April 4 to May 4. Just go to givebigkern.org, find a nonprofit you feel passionate about, and, as Mascot Billy the Give Big Goat likes to say, “Give B-I-I-I-G!”

Time to ‘Give B-I-I-I-G!’ to Local Nonprofits

KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Growing community.
Growing philanthropy.

Kern Community Foundation

By Louis Medina
Director of Community Impact

Throughout April, the Bakersfield News Observer will feature stories contributed by local nonprofits participating

in the Give Big Kern online fundraising campaign.

Observed on the first Tuesday in May, Give Big Kern is a dynamic and fun day of giving hosted by Kern Community Foundation to foster local philanthropy in support of 501(c)(3) charitable organizations in Kern County. The effort allows nonprofits registered with the Foundation to gain visibility as they engage the entire community in “One day to celebrate the giving spirit of Kern County!” But, in order to not keep early-bird donors waiting, the website givebigkern.org starts receiving donations a month out: So, from April 4 through May 4 this year, anyone willing to make a minimum online donation of \$5 can visit givebigkern.org, search among more than 100 participating organizations, and give to the causes they care about, or pledge volunteer hours.

The public’s generosity thus helps meet local charities’ needs—including those caused by the ongoing pandemic. Because it is an online effort, Give Big Kern is a safe, social-distancing-compliant way for nonprofits to fundraise—and it is free to participating agencies thanks to our generous sponsors’ support. Small transaction fees

charged per donation are covered by donors.

Since its launch in 2016, Give Big Kern has raised more than \$1.7 million from thousands of community members to benefit hundreds of local charities. Our best year so far was 2020: Less than two months into the COVID shut down, Give Big Kern raised close to three-quarters of a million dollars for 125 participating agencies. Give Big Kern is the 2019 and 2020 winner of the Beautiful Bakersfield Award for helping to create “A Better Bakersfield.”

Our mascot, Billy the Give Big Goat, encourages everyone to “Give B-i-i-i-g!” once again in 2021. Simply go to givebigkern.org, find your passion, and give!

Consider giving locally to the charities featured in the pages of the Bakersfield News Observer this week and in the following issues till the end of the month. Because Give Big Kern also involves a friendly competition for prizes that go to the top performing organizations, who knows: You might help your favorite nonprofit earn some extra cash as icing on the cake! For more information, write to us at info@kernfoundation.org.



Two of the girls from the Children to Love International children’s home in India. (Photo courtesy of Children to Love International)



Children to Love INTERNATIONAL

Children to Love International

By Julie Bell,
Communications Coordinator

Children to Love International (CTL) was founded in 1993 in response to the Romanian orphan crisis. CTL began with Americans bringing milk and vitamins to children cared for in Romanian government orphanages and has grown into a 501(c)(3) organization with partner ministries in Romania, India, Uganda, Ukraine and Thailand serving over 1,000 children and many others.

CTL comes alongside and empowers local, in-country ministries that are serving as protective havens for vulnerable children, investing in long-term relationships that result in lasting community and life change. These ministries are led by skilled and trained professionals serving within their own communities.

Though most things in our lives have been canceled or postponed over the last year, loving and serving children and families has not. Our partners have been able to help nearly 20,000 people during this pandemic. Ministry has looked different, but they have continued to serve the least, the lost and the littlest. Closed borders and mandatory quarantines have required the ministries to readapt and devise new and creative ways to serve children and families from a distance—as well as to bring the light and hope of Jesus to those on the streets.

Though government regulations have changed things quite drastically, God is at work and is meeting needs through Children to Love. Last year, Give Big Kern allowed us to raise funds to help our partners not only survive but thrive during COVID-19. And they’ve done just that! Through this year’s Give Big Kern efforts, we’re hoping to introduce more community members to CTL’s mission and raise funds to further our work and invest in new and ongoing special projects. Donate to us by visiting givebigkern.org and searching for “children to love.”

If you’d like to learn more about Children to Love, visit our website childrentolove.org or call 661-588-9000.



PathPoint

By Shawn White, Vice President
PathPoint Kern County

As we look ahead and see the light at the end of the COVID tunnel, PathPoint would like to thank everyone who has assisted us in fulfilling our mission throughout the pandemic: supporting people in living the life they chose. While our physical facility closed temporarily, our services for individuals with developmental disabilities remain operational. Our dedicated staff are hosting daily online classes, dropping off weekly learning packets to people sheltering at home, and continuing to support people in essential jobs at places like grocery stores with onsite job coaching.

Individuals with developmental disabilities face additional challenges with the public health crisis, including underlying health issues that put them at a higher risk for contracting COVID-19 and developing serious or life-threatening complications. For many, changes in routine are often disruptive, and PathPoint has stepped up to help provide extra support. In addition to offering virtual educational and vocational classes, we have been offering much-needed pre-pandemic activities, such as birthday celebrations for the people we support with socially distanced gift drop-offs and drive-by celebrations. Recently, people with disabilities were prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine and we are supporting them in obtaining appointments and accommodations as needed.

The impact of the pandemic will remain through 2021 and continued financial support from the community will be used to meet critical needs, such as funding assistive technology for individuals to access online classes and making health and safety modifications to our facility in anticipation of welcoming individuals back to our programs in person. For more information about PathPoint’s services, please contact Shawn White at (661) 809-6848 or visit www.pathpoint.org.



PathPoint Direct Support Professional, Maria (right) safely delivers a gift to client Tiffany for her birthday! People supported by PathPoint enjoy these much-needed celebrations during the pandemic thanks to generous donors. (Photo courtesy of PathPoint)

[PathPoint.org](https://www.pathpoint.org). Donate to us by going to givebigkern.org and searching for “pathpoint.”



Arvin Girls’ Varsity Squad picking up equipment donated to their team. (Photo courtesy of Kern Community Tennis Association)



Kern Community Tennis Association

By Jerry Matthews,
Board Member

The past year has reminded us of the value of many things we were taking for granted. Seeing children return to their classrooms and extracurricular activities is wonderful. Kern Community Tennis Association has promoted physical fitness through tennis in our community for nearly 60 years. That mission was expanded in 2018 to provide necessary equipment to the hundreds of student athletes who were being excluded from these activities because they could not afford their own.

Requests were more than we anticipated and soon overwhelmed our modest budget, but we also received great community support. We succeeded by running a very efficient operation and aggressively pursuing new sponsors. During the first two years, we donated over 700 tennis

racquets, 400 pairs of shoes, and 10,000 practice balls to 26 high schools. The original retail value of that equipment exceeded \$200,000, but we were able to deliver it for a small fraction of that cost by establishing partnerships with major retailers, using all volunteer labor, and building a strong network with high school coaches.

Playing tennis is certainly fun, but tennis is just a means to an end. Our objective is to provide each of these young people with the opportunity to learn a lifetime sport, be part of a team, and discover that members of their community care about them. Studies have also shown that students who participate in athletics perform better in the classroom and have an increased rate of graduation.

Our objective is to donate 400 racquets and 400 pairs of shoes each school year. We have joined Give Big Kern to help us raise the \$20,000 annually needed to achieve that goal and to educate the community on our impact. Donate to us by going to givebigkern.org and searching for “tennis” or “KCTA.” For more information about KCTA, please go to www.kerntennis.org or email jerry.matthews004@gmail.com.



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‘Give B-I-I-I-G!’ to Local Nonprofits on givebigkern.org

Throughout April, the Bakersfield News Observer will continue to feature stories contributed by local nonprofits participating in the Give Big Kern online fundraising campaign hosted by Kern Community Foundation.

Consider giving locally to the charities featured in the pages of the Bakersfield News Observer this week and in the following issues till the end of the month. Simply go to givebigkern.org, use the search bar to find a nonprofit you care about, and give. The minimum donation is just \$5. The Give Big Kern campaigns continues till May 4.

You can also pledge volunteer hours to the organization of your choice by using the menu at the top of the page on the Give Big Kern website and choosing the “Volunteering” option. Fill out a brief form online, choose the agency you would like to support through volunteering from the drop-down menu, and your contact information will be provided to them so they can get in touch with you when public health protocols allow. For more information, write to us at info@kernfoundation.org.



Global Family

protecting children preserving families



Girls have fun while creating crafts at a Global Family girls empowerment prevention program in Bakersfield. (Photo courtesy of Global Family Care Network.)

Global Family Care Network

By Charity Jensen
Head of Programs

Global Family Care Network is a nonprofit organization working to protect children and preserve families in Kern County, and in nine countries worldwide. We implement anti-human trafficking education, girls’ empowerment, shelter, and aftercare programs. Global Family founded the Daughter Project Girls Home (DPGH) in Bakersfield in 2016, a residential therapeutic program that serves victims of commercial sexual exploitation who are minors—between ages 12 and 18. The DPGH provides evidence-based and trauma-informed therapeutic, educational, social, and case management services.

According to the Polaris Project, a data-driven social justice movement that combats sex and labor trafficking, there was a 25% jump in human trafficking cases from 2017 to 2019, with 23,078 survivors identified. California is one of the largest sites of human trafficking in the United States. In 2018, there were 1,654 cases of human trafficking reported in California alone, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Commercially sexually exploited children have complex physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. The trauma they experience is multifaceted and long-term. Thus, addressing and healing from this particular type of trauma requires dedication and time spent in therapy and self-care. No child should be in a situation where they are displaced from a home and vulnerable to being out on the streets, where they can fall prey to further abuse, neglect, and/or commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Global Family is excited to participate in Give Big Kern 2021! Our goal is to raise funding from the community to provide high-quality services to victims of trafficking in Kern County. All donations go directly to our programs. Funding will be used to ensure that therapeutic, educational, and social programs are provided to survivors, to help them recover and move towards independence.

Donate to us by visiting givebigkern.org and searching for “global family.” Learn more about us at globalfamily.care.



No Sister Left Behind CEO Glenda Woolfolk and Treasurer Linda Factory pass out personal protective equipment at a health fair held in conjunction with other agencies at Bakersfield High School in March. (Photo courtesy of No Sister Left Behind)

No Sister Left Behind

By Glenda Woolfolk
President/ CEO

No Sister Left Behind was launched in an effort to lessen the disparities associated with Black women concerning their well-being.

No Sister Left Behind addresses these disparities from a holistic approach called “Total Well-being.” The seven aspects of total well-being are social, mental, emotional, physical, financial, career and community.

Our Total Well-being programs provide women with the tools they need to thrive in their home, community and beyond.

We need help with startup costs associated with daily sustainability such as office space and office equipment, maintenance, marketing, outreach through a “boots on the ground” approach, materials needed for program participants, and with providing essential COVID personal protective equipment and supplies needed to maintain Centers for Disease Control and State of California public safety guidelines.

Because COVID has changed what our programs were planned to look like, we have begun our programs virtually, and as public health guidelines are relaxed, we will change to in-person service delivery. All of No Sister Left Behind’s programs are free and open to the public.

Our hope is that through Give Big Kern we will raise the funds needed to provide successful programs while introducing our much-needed organization to the local community. We are grateful for the opportunity to join other nonprofit organizations participating in Give Big Kern and also working hard to serve Kern County. To donate to us between now and May 4, visit givebigkern.org and search for “no sister left behind.” For more information, please e-mail nosisterleftbehind2@gmail.com, or call 661-378-7783. Please visit our website, nosisterleftbehind2.org.



This volunteer from a local church group helped bag STEM kits for STEMTaught Foundation to deliver to local schools. Volunteers of all ages, including families and service clubs, are needed. Write to Stemtaughtfoundation@gmail.com for more information. (Photo courtesy of STEMTaught Foundation)

STEMTaught Foundation

By Soleil Hurst
Community Outreach Coordinator

For the past six years, the STEMTaught Foundation has worked daily with thousands of teachers, students, and administrators of K-6 public schools in Kern County and others in California to deliver engaging STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) education resources free of charge.

During the last five years, we have helped over 4,000 classrooms participate in hands-on STEM labs and computer programming activities. We have offered curricular materials and training to more than 600 teachers to help them be more confident and experienced in conducting science labs in their own classrooms. The STEMTaught Foundation donates supplies to schools in need, including inner city schools and rural schools in the agricultural farming communities of Kern County.

Our mission is to impact youth through hands-on STEM education and to create solutions for better hands-on STEM in classrooms.

The school districts we serve are Delano, Shafter, Rio Bravo Greely, Rosedale Union, Midway, Wayside Elementary in Bakersfield City School District, and Berkshire Elementary in Panama-Buena Vista School District.

Normally we operate with an open sign-up calendar and teachers sign up for class visits. We bring fun hands-on STEM activities to their classrooms and work directly with students and teachers. The pandemic has completely changed how we serve, since COVID-19 shut down schools; but the STEMTaught Foundation has worked hard to keep kids innovating and creating at home with STEM kits donated to 10,000 students in grades K-6. STEMTaught scientists have run hands-on Zoom sessions with thousands of students in distance learning classrooms all over Kern County. We also benefit from lots of community volunteers without whom we could never assemble all the STEM kits we distribute.

Your generous donation will go toward supporting our efforts in Kern County schools. Donate to the STEMTaught Foundation by visiting givebigkern.org, then searching for “stemtaught.” You can also visit our website, stemtaughtfoundation.org, to learn more about our work.



Building houses, building hope



Habitat volunteers framing and raising the walls for the Rodman home in East Bakersfield in March 2020, before having to close our construction site due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will provide a single mother of two and her children a stable place to call home. (Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity Golden Empire)

Habitat for Humanity Golden Empire

By Verenise De La Cruz
Resource Development Coordinator

Since 1990, Habitat for Humanity Golden Empire has tackled the issue of housing insecurity in our community by partnering with low-income families in Kern County and assisting them in getting access to safe, secure, and affordable housing options.

We build decent and affordable homes for members of our community while providing an outlet where unwanted items can be donated and repurposed at our Habitat ReStore, a combination nonprofit home improvement store, second-hand market, and donation center.

Our Habitat ReStore is located at 5101 White Lane.

We are proud to share that since our establishment, Habitat Golden Empire has helped 82 families find affordable housing and has worked with over 160 low-income homeowners through our Habitat Home Repair Program since 2011. Habitat Homeowners in Kern county have also financed over \$10 million in affordable mortgages.

At HFHGE, we rely heavily on generous community support to continue our projects while serving families. We could not have accomplished all that we have in 31 years of serving the community without the support of our benevolent Habitat volunteers, partners, and stakeholders. They are the true Habitat Heroes of it all!

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has impacted everyone in our country, presenting significant, unforeseen challenges. For HFHGE, we were forced to close our doors at our office and ReStore, which impacted our ability to provide needed products, programs, and services to people in need. Through it all, our amazing community continued to stand with us and graciously welcomed our re-opening in June 2020.

As we persevere through these challenging times, we ask you to consider helping drive our mission of providing long-term sustainable housing for families in Kern County by donating to us through Give Big Kern.

Just go to givebigkern.org and search “Habitat Golden Empire” to find our page. Then give using the “Donate” button.



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Students working during the Bakersfield Museum of Art (BMoA) Summer Art Camp. (Photo courtesy of the Bakersfield Museum of Art)

Bakersfield Museum of Art

By Amy D. Smith
Executive Director

Bakersfield Museum of Art (BMoA) inspires and engages audiences through the exhibition and preservation of fine art, educational programs, community outreach, and special events. During our more than 60-year history, we have accessioned more than 350 works on paper, sculptures, photographs and paintings created by 20th and 21st century California artists. Additionally, as part of our mission, we provide arts education programs to more than 10,000 children annually through programs including Museum on the Move, Saturday Studio and ArtReach.

Like so many organizations, the COVID19 pandemic forced us to close our doors in March 2020. We wondered when we could return to normal operations, and how we could continue bringing visual arts experiences to our community. A social media campaign we launched, #bmoachalkyourwalk, told us that even though we were closed to the public, the public still needed BMoA.

To meet that need, we made several adjustments to our exhibits and events calendar.

- Created our Museum at Home initiative (bmoa.org/museumathome): a series of online essays, downloadable art projects, interviews, and podcast episodes, each sharing from our permanent collection and exhibits with our community.
- Transformed our 2020 Spring fundraiser, ARTMIX, into an online art exhibition with grab-and-go food and drink specials from local restaurants.
- Launched our first virtual exhibition featuring our Artworks Class of 2020, a group of 16 gifted high school art students whose work was featured in an online BMoA exhibition.
- Partnered with Donahue Schriber and the Kern County Department of Public Health to produce our annual Via Arté Italian Street Painting Exhibition at The Marketplace in October 2020, complete with masks, attendance limits and social distancing.

We're open to the public again, but the impact on our financial wellbeing remains. Our need for your support is greater than ever. Consider making a donation by visiting givebigkern.org between now and May 4, then searching for "bmoa."



In this pre-COVID photo, students in Bakersfield Ivy Legacy Foundation's Ascend Program came together to plant a vegetable garden in Downtown Bakersfield. (Photo courtesy of Bakersfield Ivy Legacy Foundation)

Bakersfield Ivy Legacy Foundation

By Raquell Jones
President

The Bakersfield Ivy Legacy Foundation (BILF) is a proud supporter of the Give Big Kern fundraising campaign. This is an exciting opportunity for the BILF to partner together with the Bakersfield community to raise money to support our philanthropic targets: education, health awareness, environmental sustainability and other issues affecting the African American community.

We are an African American organization that is committed to helping our youth, especially young girls and women, to reach their full potential. We seek to extend the circle of support through educational forums, field trips, workshops and videos highlighting how our youth can prepare for college entry; also, we engage in projects with Dignity Health, the Kern High School District and other similar community and educational organizations, which help us touch the lives of over 500 students each year. Visit www.bakersfieldivylegacy.org for more information on all our programs, or email us at info@bakersfieldivylegacy.org

Every dollar that we raise together through the Give Big Kern fundraiser makes a 100% impact on our mission. Together we must elevate, empower, and embrace our community through education, health awareness, and economic and environmental sustainability. Donate to us by visiting givebigkern.org between now and May 4, then searching for "Ivy." Thank you.



Ed Clark, left, says, "I volunteer as a mentor with Bakersfield Angels for the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of youth in my community." With him is Robert Davis, a foster youth he mentors. (Photo courtesy of Bakersfield Angels)

Bakersfield Angels

By Denise Reynen
Director of Programs

May 4 is not only Give Big Kern, but also National Foster Care Day, an especially significant time of year for us at Bakersfield Angels. We are a local chapter of a national organization that wraps support around children, youth and families experiencing foster care. Last year was our inaugural year and partnering with Give Big Kern was incredibly successful! We raised over \$62,000 with help from a generous matching donor.

This year our goal is twofold: to raise money to further our reach and impact, and more importantly, to rally our community around our mission to make a difference in the life of each child and youth experiencing foster care locally.

The reality is that many of the issues plaguing our county--homelessness, incarceration, sex trafficking, unemployment--are disproportionately populated with foster or formerly foster youth. Our programs help change the trajectory of the lives of the more than 2,000 children and youth in foster care in Kern County, thereby stemming the prevalence of these issues.

Our programs, launched in September of 2020, are already producing life-giving relationships for our volunteers as well as the children and families we serve. The Love Box program pairs local foster families with volunteers who are matched based on compatibility and needs. The Dare to Dream program is a one-on-one mentorship program for foster children and youth ages 11-24.

We are calling on our generous community to consider stepping up to make a difference. Not everyone is called to foster, and not everyone is called to adopt, but EVERYONE can make a difference in the life of a child.

Donate to us through givebigkern.org by searching for "angels." To learn how to get involved with Bakersfield Angels, visit our website bakersfieldangels.org, Facebook @BFieldAngels, or Instagram @bakersfield_angels. E-mail us at info@bakersfieldangels.org.



The Bakersfield Center for Pastoral Counseling, an outreach ministry of the Free Anglican Church of Emmanuel USA, offers peer-led support groups that are "warm and inviting." (Photo courtesy of Bakersfield Center for Pastoral Counseling)

Bakersfield Center for Pastoral Counseling

By Sarah Drake
Executive Assistant

The Bakersfield Center for Pastoral Counseling is an outreach ministry of the Free Anglican Church of Emmanuel USA (FACE-USA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Originally founded in 2013 by Dr. Abraham David Parker in Phoenix, Arizona, FACE-USA operates in Kern County as the Free Anglican Diocese of California and is a member organization of the Worldwide Anglican Church in North America (WAC-NA).

At the Bakersfield Center, we provide free or low-cost pastoral, professional, and peer counseling services to Kern residents in need. Our pastoral counseling staff includes diaconal candidate Dr. Nicole Allen and our Center founder Dr. Abraham David Parker. Both pastoral counselors have received graduate training in either counseling psychology or pastoral psychotherapy, and Dr. Parker's personal experience and pastoral expertise stretch back 17 years to his ordination in 2004.

The Center's professional counseling services are facilitated by our Executive Director, Mesha Muwanga, LMFT. As a California-state Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Mesha offers professional counseling services to individuals, couples, and families, that seamlessly blend counseling theory together with biblical principles. Of course, Mesha and all the counselors on staff here at the Center gladly offer their services to all without discrimination!

Our Center prides itself as a safe space for Kern residents living with mental illness or emotional difficulties to care for each other through a variety of peer-led support groups including Emotions Anonymous and our National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Support Group which is held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of every month. We also distribute bags of food to our Center clients challenged with food insecurity. In addition to our pastoral, professional, and pastoral counseling services, the Center also provides referrals to other agencies as needed for the benefit of the client. Help spread the word, donate, or sign up as a volunteer at GiveBigKern.org! Search for "pastoral."



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BCB
BAKERSFIELD CITY BALLET



During the pandemic, Bakersfield City Ballet dancers traded pointe shoes for tennis shoes, and took their performances literally to the streets of Bakersfield by creating Curbside Ballet. (Photo courtesy of Bakersfield City Ballet)

Bakersfield City Ballet

By Milissa Ackerley
Board Member in Charge of Fundraising

In 1993, Bakersfield Civic Dance Company, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was founded with the artistic vision to provide an opportunity for local dancers to further their training and extend their passion for the arts to the community. Twenty-eight years later, that same company, now known as Bakersfield City Ballet, remains dedicated to that vision.

Bakersfield City Ballet is unique: We are not a dance studio, but rather a nonprofit pre-professional ballet company consisting of members dedicated to refining their ballet technique and polishing their artistry. BCB acts as a stepping-stone between studio training and a professional career. Dancers do not pay dues or a participation fee. As a nonprofit, we are funded by personal and corporate donations, grants, and the fundraising efforts of our dancers and board members throughout the year.

As COVID-19 shut down theatres and venues, we did what dancers do and pivoted. We traded in pointe shoes for tennis shoes and created Curbside Ballet, which brought our performances to neighborhood streets and parks, allowing hundreds of community members—from children to grandparents—to see ballet live when stages were closed. Our two runs of Curbside Ballet last November and February featured original choreography by two Bakersfield natives.

BCB contributes to the development of our community's rich culture by bringing the beauty of dance to more lives through annual performances. Company members and artistic faculty participate throughout the year in community outreach efforts with the intention of inspiring and cultivating a love for the arts through dance. We believe anyone should have access to the performing arts as a participant or patron, knowing that exposure in any capacity can leave one feeling inspired, awed, and perhaps aspiring to become the next Misty Copeland!

Consider donating to us through givebigkern.org now through May 4. Search for "ballet." To learn more about us, visit our website, bakersfieldcityballet.org.

THE
CENTER
for Sexuality
& Gender Diversity



Anne-Natasha Pinckney represents a success story for The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity: She began as a Center visitor, then volunteered as Youth Director, hired for Advocacy Services and ultimately promoted to Executive Director. (Photo courtesy of The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity)

The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity

By Cindy J. Smith
Past-President

The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity is celebrating its 10th anniversary in Bakersfield. Originally founded by a grass-roots effort of a dozen LGBTQ+ community members in 2011, The Center has grown to two locations and full-time staffing. A multipurpose outreach center at 902 18th Street provides a safe space for gatherings, with a second location in the southwest housing administrative offices and counseling services.

The Center serves a diverse and varied Kern County LGBTQ+ community who identify along the entire spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities. Its primary mission is to provide services to support LGBTQ+ people living happy, productive, fulfilling lives in a safe and supportive community. Additionally, The Center offers education for the wider community to increase acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ people. Executive Director Anne-Natasha Pinckney explains, "The Center is a place that helps you celebrate who you are...a place to be authentic and just comfortable."

Group meetings are currently being offered virtually due to COVID restrictions, and include programs for youth and adults, with a recent new addition directed to QTBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and other People of Color) individuals. Visitors regularly enjoy events ranging from "Know Your Rights" forums to the highly popular "LGBTQ Black History Month Celebration."

We invite the LGBTQ+ community, family and allies to partner with us through volunteering and financial support. We need your help in ensuring that The Center can continue to add quality to the lives of all LGBTQ+ people in our community.

The Center is currently participating in Give Big Kern to gain visibility and raise funds. Donate to us by visiting givebigkern.org, then searching for "The Center" or "LGBT" to find us. For more information about The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity, visit TheCenterBak.org.

'Give B-I-I-I-G!' to Local Charities on givebigkern.org thru May 4th!

By Louis Medina, Director of Community Impact

Kern Community Foundation

Give Big Kern, "One Day to Celebrate the Giving Spirit of Kern County!" is almost here. Throughout April, the Bakersfield News Observer has helped spread the word about Kern's Official Giving Day, which, since 2016, is observed on the first Tuesday in May—May 4th this year. Hosted by Kern Community Foundation, this online fundraising event is benefiting close to 130 nonprofits that have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the years, the Bakersfield News Observer has been a key partner in helping Kern Community Foundation fulfill its mission of "Growing Community. Growing Philanthropy." through Give Big Kern, which has raised more than \$1.7 million dollars for Kern County charities since its launch.

We are growing community together with the BNO by highlighting in these pages a wide range of nonprofits that are working hard to make Kern a better place for all. Some of them may even be nonprofits that have offered services to you or someone you know free of charge.

We are growing philanthropy together by inviting you, the readers of the BNO, to become involved in giving back to local charitable causes. Give Big Kern is a true community event. Won't you be a part of it?

Please consider the charities featured in this monthlong series of articles submitted by the nonprofits themselves. Their appeals are timely and from the heart. Or give to any of the other agencies participating in Give Big Kern. Simply go to givebigkern.org, use the search bar to find a nonprofit you care about, and give. Find your passion! The minimum donation is just \$5, and the Give Big Kern campaign continues till May 4th. Thank you! For more information, write to us at info@kernfoundation.org.



Special
Olympics
Southern California



Bakersfield Resident Ronnie D. beams with pride as she shows off the Special Olympics Gold Medal she won at a local bowling competition in 2019. (Photo courtesy of Special Olympics Southern California)

Special Olympics Southern California

By Veronica Smiddle
Development Coordinator

Special Olympics Southern California empowers more than 550 athletes in Kern County, but for every person we lift up, there are many more people with intellectual disabilities who need our programming.

By joining the Special Olympics team, you can help prepare people with intellectual disabilities, one of the most vulnerable populations in the world, to succeed at life.

We reduce bullying in schools, combat physical and mental health issues by providing free wellness programs, and train people with intellectual disabilities to live independently through sports and leadership programming.

Our sports, health, and leadership programming is vital for the athletes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether in-person or virtual, we are giving people the tools, training, and skills to break down barriers and shatter stereotypes.

Please donate to us today through May 4 on givebigkern.org (search for "Special Olympics") and help us raise \$5,000 to empower athletes to overcome the challenges of life, fight against oppression, and spread inclusion for all.

You can learn more about Special Olympics Southern California at www.sosc.org/kern, or by calling 661-383-2905. Thank you!

THE CAT PEOPLE



Sister Morrison, a missionary volunteer, stands under a cat tree in The Blue Room, or "teenagers room," of The Cat People's sanctuary for rescued cats. (Photo courtesy of The Cat People)

The Cat People

By Barbara Hays, President
& Ranae Harter, Secretary

Founded in 1990, The Cat People has worked to serve cats and assist cat owners in Bakersfield through education, spay/neuter programs, the monitoring of cat colonies at Hart Park, food and senior assistance, and the management and operation of a sanctuary for rescued cats.

In 2017, The Cat People opened our Pawsitively Cats rescue sanctuary for rescued cats that were previously fostered. Currently, close to 100 abused, emergency-rescued and senior cats are cared for by volunteers.

Efforts are made to adopt out those without medical or behavior issues while senior cats will live out their lives in beautiful settings and surrounded by love. As space permits, cat owners, through bequests, can entrust The Cat People to care for their beloved cats to live out their lives at the sanctuary.

Since 2019, The Cat People has hosted six mobile spay clinics designed to offer free spay/neuters for both domestic, feral and community cats. Thus far, at a cost of \$42,000 raised through fundraising and private donations, over 1,000 cats have been altered, preventing thousands of unwanted litters.

Contributions to The Cat People fund several programs:

- The Food Assistance Program helps low-income residents with monthly allotments of cat food and litter.

- Low-income cat owners are also helped through the Spay Today Program designed to prevent needless breeding of companion cats.

- The Voucher Program provides financial assistance to good Samaritans in efforts to alter feral or unowned community cats.

- Finally, the Park Program involves teams of volunteers trained to monitor, feed and rescue abandoned cats or trap, alter and return feral cats.

Won't you donate to us on givebigkern.org through May 4th? Search for "the cat people."

For more information on The Cat People's programs, visit thecatpeople.org, and follow us on Facebook (@TheCatPeople) and Instagram (@bakersfieldcatpeople).