

Enhancing Souls, Minds and Imagination Through Arts for the Youth

The Community Foundation Profiles

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything,” once attributed the famed Athenian philosopher, Plato. In San Luis Obispo County, music and the arts inspire souls, minds and imaginations of children through the [Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation \(PRYAF\)](#). They have provided children with free classes in the visual and performing arts for over 21 years. With assistance from The Community Foundation, PRYAF has developed fine art programs vital to the cognitive growth and development of students, driving all other learning for youth as they become contributing members of the community.

Partnership with The Community Foundation began for PRYAF in 2016 as they applied for a grant to support their Free Music Program. The program provides all instruments, supplies, props, costumes and materials needed for all music classes free of charge and had previously struggled with sometimes broken instruments and equipment. With funding from The Community Foundation, many instruments were updated.



“Our piano classes benefited greatly from this support,” said Emily Jagger, Director of Development at the PRYAF. “With the additional funding, we were able to replace our nearly 20-year-old, broken keyboards with new keyboards that sound fantastic and help the students who have a passion for the piano find an ever deeper love.” Due to popularity, all of PRYAF’s piano classes have waiting lists.

The Community Foundation’s grants didn’t stop at music; PRYAF’s Free Dance Program has also greatly benefited from support, and is a creative outlet for youth of all backgrounds, but especially those on the fringe of public acceptance. It supports freedom that comes from feeling comfortable in one’s skin and confidence to perform in front of others. Through grant support, Ballet, Hip-Hop, Creative Dance, Break-Dance and Jazz Dance are available for all levels and ages 5-18 years.



Six years ago, at just 12-years-old, Emily Elizabeth Oetting first discovered PRYAF. What began as her giving Break Dance and Guitar a try, has blossomed into a passion for music. Through classes at PRYAF, she conquered fears of public performance and singing, and now performs in numerous local dance shows. Today, her early fear of singing has transformed to be her favorite pastime; one that she enriches with her ability to play over ten instruments by the time she graduates PRYAF.

Emily Oetting will be attending college in the fall with the goal of a double major in Special Needs Education and Vocal Performance. “I hope to find a vocation that allows me to start a Special Needs Choir where I can teach mentally and physically disabled children to sing,” said Emily. “So much of what I want to do with my life has to do with the impact PRYAF left on me. I could never fully thank each and every teacher and student for the things they did for me and the opportunities they gave me.”

“PRYAF provides all children a safe place to learn about the arts, regardless of socioeconomic status,” said Emily Jagger as she thinks about the success stories she has seen over the years. “As older students begin to enter the working world, college or other bright futures, we see the positive impact our program has had on their lives.”

The Community Foundation is honored to work in partnership with the Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation, as they combine efforts to promote self-reliance, enhance self-esteem and instill a sense of wholeness in local youth by providing a safe, accessible environment where they can experience the arts. These joint efforts promote cultural understanding and enhance the local community.