

Community

@AhwatukeeFN | @AhwatukeeFN

www.ahwatukee.com

Music Maker Workshops marks 25 melodious years

BY COTY DOLORES MIRANDA
AFN Contributor

An Ahwatukee family business celebrates 25 years teaching music to adults and children, and it all began with Beverly Bigam's appreciation of the art.

Music Maker Workshop launched in 1997 when Bigam started her business teaching music via keyboard to senior citizens throughout Maricopa County.

She'd previously taught online, focusing on the increasingly ubiquitous keyboards.

Now 77, she and her husband of 52 years, Larry Bigam, are retired in Sun Lakes, though she continues to teach some of her previous adult students online.

She opened her brick and mortar store in 2002 with an eye to offering music lessons to children as well as adults.

"I'd been going to senior centers and teaching, so this was a progression. I found a place and opened up, and I did



Music Makers Workshop, marking 25 years in Ahwatukee, was founded by Beverly Bigam, shown here at the piano with her daughters Shelley Yakubow and Kim Steedman, who are now co-directors. (Special to AFN)

"I didn't consider myself a business woman," insisted Bigam. "God was with me all the way. It's like a walking miracle business."

She persevered, and her Music Makers Workshop business burgeoned.

She was joined by her two daughters, Shelley Yakubow and Kim Steedman, now MMW's co-directors. They are assisted by Jessica Magee, who has served as studio manager for 13 years and holds a bachelor's in music from Northern Arizona University.

Today, Music Maker Workshops has a 5,000-square-foot facility with 35 faculty members and approximately 800 students ranging in age from preschool students through seniors.

They have occupied their 3233 E. Chandler Blvd studio since 2002, renovating and expanding their facility so that it now boasts 19 classrooms.

Under the co-directorship of Bigam's daughters, Music Makers has continued

it with fear and trembling," she admitted. "I had 40 students and I wondered

how many students would I need to pay the rent."

SEE MUSIC PAGE 23

100+ Women Who Care raises over \$1M for charity

BY KIM TARNOPOLSKI
AFN Guest Writer

One hundred dollars at a time is how 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun exceeded their goal of donating \$1 Million to local nonprofits.

Eight years ago, Kim Tarnopolski, Jacqueline Destremps, Stephanie Millner, and Jenn Kaye launched a people-centered form of philanthropy called a giving circle in Ahwatukee and Scottsdale.

A giving circle brings a group of people with shared values together to collectively discuss and decide where to make a pooled gift.

Giving circles support with their dollars, but also build awareness and edu-

cate members about the great work being done by local charities. Individuals multiply their impact and knowledge, have fun, and connect with their local community.

"Over the last eight years, we've facilitated 91 giving circles in the Valley. That is 91 times our members were given the opportunity to donate \$100 to a deserving nonprofit," said Stephanie Millner, chief charity officer. "When you add all those donations together, it quickly multiples to tens of thousands of dollars each year."

In November, the chapter's Ahwatukee group delivered \$15,400 to the Armer Foundation for Kids.

This Ahwatukee-based nonprofit has

SEE ARMER PAGE 22



Jennifer Armer, founder and executive director of Armer Foundation for Kids, holds the donation she received from the Ahwatukee chapter of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun. (Special to AFN)

ARMER FROM PAGE 21

helped over 25 children with life-threatening illnesses since its founding in 2019.

The foundation has indirectly impacted the lives of thousands of Valley children (and their families) via donations to hospitals, which have included things like toys, gas cards, grocery cards, Uber cards, toiletries for parents, music equipment, and more.

One of the Foundation's success stories centers on a 10-year-old named Riley. Riley was diagnosed with Perthes Disease, a rare childhood disease where the blood flow to the femoral head stops for no reason and the bones start to die.

Riley's family connected with a specialist in Baltimore who recommended a hip distraction with an external exor plus three weeks of extensive physical therapy.

The external exor needed to remain on for four months and then Riley needed to return to Baltimore to have another surgery to remove it.

The foundation worked with Wings

of Humanity to provide a free, private flight to Baltimore for the surgery.

It also partnered with several organizations to construct a main floor bedroom in Riley's two-story home, allowing Riley to avoid stair climbing to her second-floor bedroom.

Today, Riley can walk with a slight limp but no longer needs a wheelchair or crutches! She is in a wait-and-see mode to determine how her growth rate impacts her disease.

We are overwhelmed by the kindness of 100+ Women Who Care and their generosity in gifting \$15,400 to the Armer Foundation, said Jennifer Armer, founder of the Armer Foundation for Kids.

There are 17 children we are currently assisting across the Valley who require life-saving treatments, and this donation will directly benefit their care.

To learn more about Armer Foundation for Kids visit armerfoundation.org.

To learn more, register, and attend 100+ Women Who Care's next giving circle in Ahwatukee on January 31: 100wucvalleyofthesun.org. ■

Diatom Insurance awards Armer Foundation \$10K

AFN NEWS STAFF

The Armer Foundation for Kids found another guardian angel in the form of Diatom Insurance Company, which awarded it \$10,000.

The \$10,000 award will help Armer Foundation for Kids assist families with paying copays, premiums, deductibles, and any medical-related out-of-pocket expenses when health insurance is not enough, the company said in a release.

The funds will also provide gas gift cards to allow parents to transport their children to and from the hospitals for required chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Diatom co-owner Eric Gidley originally received a \$5,000 donation for Armer Foundation for Kids thanks to a submission process with Liberty Mutual and Safeco Insurance through their 2022

Make More Happen awards.

A story of their local partnership was featured on the official Make More Happen microsite, agentgiving.com/Diatom-Insurance-Company, where Diatom Insurance Company had the opportunity to raise an additional \$5,000 by conducting a local awareness campaign for the nonprofit.

Throughout 2022, Liberty Mutual and Safeco will select up to 37 independent agents nationwide for a Make More Happen Award and donate up to \$370,000 to the nonprofits supported by them.

Agencies became eligible for the award by submitting an application and photos demonstrating their commitment to a specific nonprofit.

Presenting the check to foundation founder Jennifer Armer recently were Diatom co-owners Kenneth Gidley, sales manager, and Eric Gidley, marketing manager. ■