

---

**FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF** [INFO@ROSEADVOCACY.ORG](mailto:INFO@ROSEADVOCACY.ORG)

---

From the Phoenix Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/news/2022/07/22/new-nonprofits-to-know-valley.html>

## Fighting the good fight: Founders of some of the Valley's newest nonprofits on what inspired them to get started

Jul 22, 2022, 6:00am MST

---

From an organization working to build tiny homes for homeless women to another helping children dealing with grief, dozens of nonprofits have formed across the Valley over the past few years. They faced having to source funding while also competing with a more than two-year pandemic.

In the stories that follow, the leaders of nine new Valley nonprofits share what inspired their organization and what drives them to do what they do.

A major challenge for many, especially those which relied on fundraising events, such as 5K walks and races, was raising enough money to survive through the pandemic. For the organizations that



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

Harmony Project Phoenix provides kids of all backgrounds with music lessons and helps provide resources to send those kids to college.

work with students, the switch to online learning in 2020 posed the biggest challenge.

Some organizations, such as Maria Brunner's Musically Fed, saw a greater need during the pandemic. Instead of donating unused food from musical events to outside agencies, the food was donated to those working in the events industry who were suddenly out of a job during the Covid shutdowns.

Lev Horodyskyj saw the need for better tools in digital education. His organization, Science Voices, is working to develop a platform designed to be accessible to places with low-bandwidth and less resources.

Each new founder or nonprofit leader is passionate about the work they do and grateful for the connections and partnerships they have made along the way. As they look to the future, many hope to expand their work beyond Arizona.

---

## **The UBU Project**

When David Simmons heard that suicide was a leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 14, he was galvanized to take action.

A survivor of his own suicide attempt in 2009, Simmons was adamant on finding a way to use his expertise and over 40 years professional experiences in arts education and the entertainment industry to help prevent youth suicide, addiction and bullying. So, he started the UBU (You Be You) Project.

A 501(c)(3) arts education outreach organization that started in 2019, the UBU Project provides a weeklong interactive curriculum to schools, juvenile detention facilities and other institutions where its staff act as guides to student-led discussions and student-driven content creation.

"We use music songwriting and also, where applicable, movements and theater to help teach kids hope and resilience, self-compassion and empathy," Simmons, founder and executive director of the UBU Project, said.

“These kids are taking ownership of what these ideas mean to them. Because the last thing that kid needs is one more random adult droning on, ‘don't hurt yourself; don't drink; don't do that.’ They need to be able to discover what it means to them.”

The UBU Project is funded by private donors and state and federal funds such as from Title IV(A) and (B), and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.

It was one anonymous donor who Simmons said, “truly sustained us through the pandemic.” The organization had less opportunities to work with schools as the transition to online formats in 2020 left the institutions focusing on its core curriculum.

Despite the limitations brought on by the pandemic, Simmons said his organization worked with other nonprofits, such as GLESN and Desert Stages Theater, so they could teach students online and in masks at a distance.

“It was the same day-to-day challenge that every business, education institution, performing arts institution had in keeping going,” Simmons said. “And it was just sticking to it and finding a new way every day.”

Now, he said the funding from the donor that kept UBU Project alive is decreasing as other funding becomes available.

Learn more about the UBU Project at <https://ubuproject.org/>

---

### **Janice's Women's Center**

Shante Saulsberry founded Janice's Women's Center in December 2020 with the mission to build 52 tiny homes to provide women and their children and pets with a safe living space different from a typical shelter.

To help fund the \$8 million project, Saulsberry opened Vaincre Boutique in June 2021. Janice's Women's Center also receives funding from foundation and community grants, as well as private donations from fundraisers on social media. Where it does not receive funding is from federal grants.

"I don't take federal funding because I don't want the state and/or the government telling me how to operate and how to assist these women because everybody is different," Saulsberry said. "And honestly, when you start to turn things into corporate style, I will lose my women. I will lose the trust of the women. And so, I refuse to do that."

For Saulsberry, her work to help women in need is personal.

"My mom, she was in shelters; she slept in tents; she slept on the streets; she hopped from shelter to shelter," Saulsberry said. "I dealt with my mom's case managers at all of these different places that failed her."

In her efforts to help a homeless woman she had met in early 2020, Saulsberry decided that she would start her own organization to support homeless women and victims of domestic violence. She chose to name her new organization after this woman, Janice.

"I see my mom in Janice, and I was like, you know what, I want better for my mom so I'm going to see what I can do to make this woman's life better," she said.

While working to fund the housing project, Saulsberry connects women in need with other organizations to help give them the housing and/or resources they need to get to safety. In total, she estimates that she has serviced about 100 women so far.

Learn more about Janice's Women's Center at <https://janiceswomenscenter.com/>

---

### **R.O.S.E. — Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly**

In an effort to educate the elderly population in how to avoid falling victim to financial scams, Joyce Petrowski started R.O.S.E. Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly in August 2021.

"Our vision is that retirement should be the best years of your life. It should be protected at all costs," Petrowski, who is also the board president of the nonprofit, said.

“And so, our goal is to, in the future, start seeing the number of victims and the dollar amount of losses decrease with the 60-plus population that gets reported each year.”

The organization puts on interactive presentations in senior living communities, and independent and assisted living facilities across Maricopa County. Petrowski said that they will not just go once and never return. Instead, the organization aims to visit a place three to four times a year to continue providing new information and resources while also keeping the conversation going about the danger of scams.

“We talk to them about the different scams, explain how they work and give them tips and tools on how to help prevent falling victim because it's not a matter of if they're going to get the phone call, the email, the text message, it's a matter of when and how often it's going to happen,” Petrowski said.

R.O.S.E. Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly receives funding from private and corporate donations as well as from some foundations. The organization has helped approximately 150-200 people so far this year.

Petrowski said she looks forward to expanding operations across the rest of Arizona and, eventually, the nation.

Learn more about R.O.S.E. Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly at <https://roseadvocacy.org/>

---

## **State Forty Eight Foundation**

What began with State Forty Eight, the apparel company that supports charities through collaborative T-shirts, eventually spawned the incorporation of a nonprofit aimed to bring a positive impact on Arizona communities.

State Forty Eight Foundation started in 2020 and its “mission is to drive global innovation and inspire community action to the support and empowerment of Arizona entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations,” Alyssa Moore, the executive director of the nonprofit, said.

The organization partners with other Arizona nonprofits to host “impact days,” which are volunteer and fundraiser events designed to help better the community. One such event Moore highlighted was in partnership with United Food Bank of Arizona and Phoenix Rising where over 200 volunteers packed 5,025 emergency food bags.

Since the nonprofit emerged from a company that was started by three Chandler-based entrepreneurs, the organization wanted to provide resources to other entrepreneurs through workshops, networking events, speaker events and grant funding.

State Forty Eight Foundation’s first entrepreneur speaker series, which occurred in fall 2021 as a free hybrid event divided into seven parts, had over 200 participants who heard “other entrepreneurs story tell and talk about their advice,” Moore said.

“We’re really stoked for this year to actually host it in person at Walter Studios in August,” Moore said.

The event will occur Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Aug. 3, 10 and 24. Each session will include two to four speakers. Learn more about the event here: <https://www.sfef-speakerseries.org/>

---

## **Musically Fed**

With a 30-year career in the music and entertainment business, Maria Brunner knew the food from such events often went to waste. She decided to repurpose it. She started Musically Fed, an organization that partners with venues, artists, promoters and management in the event industry to bring unused meals to organizations that serve those in need.

When Brunner started Musically Fed seven years ago, she funded the work from her salary. In 2019, the organization became a nonprofit. In total, Musically Fed has provided over 390,000 meals nationally, and over 105,000 of those meals were served in Arizona.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, it was the gig workers who were now in need of food.

"Most of the gig workers are 1099," Brunner said. "So, unemployment isn't necessarily an option for them — they don't have medical, the whole nine yards if you will."

That's when Brunner had the idea to do a drive-thru food pickup service for the event workers who were in need.

The first drive-thru, which was at the Scottsdale restaurant Handlebar J, provided 70 cars with food that could feed a family of six for two weeks, which the restaurant itself supplied. After the success of the first event, Brunner called Resurrection Street Ministry, a charity that Musically Fed had been giving food to before the pandemic, asking if the organization could provide food for the drive-thru.

"So up comes the big ol' Resurrection Street Ministry truck to Handlebar J with 70 boxes of fruit, 70 boxes of produce, 70 boxes of dairy and 70 boxes of dry goods," Brunner said. "Each car left with enough to feed them for two weeks. And that became the model that we did all over the nation."

Through its pandemic initiative, which was partially funded by a grant from the Country Music Association, in 2020 and 2021, Musically Fed served 135,807 meals to gig workers.

Musically Fed has seen an increasing number of donations from small individual donors. It also receives funding from foundations and industry leaders.

"Everybody could be a Musically Fed," Brunner said. "What do you have left on your pantry that you're not going to use? What did you overbuy in your refrigerator? Think it through. Because I think with the way things are going, I think we need to take care of each other."

Learn more about Musically Fed at <https://www.musicallyfed.org/>

---

### **Put on the Cape A Foundation for Hope**

It was when Sean Reavie, an Arizona police officer, was working as a detective in the child crimes unit that he got the idea to use superheroes to help children who have been abused.

He was struggling to get a young boy who had been abused to open up and trust him. He was running out of options, so Reavie decided to ask the boy if he liked superheroes.

When he did, Reavie said that the “change was instant in him.”

“He was in the fetal position looking down and soon as I asked him that, his head popped up, and his eyes went wide, and he opened up his arms and dropped his legs out and he said ‘Iron Man.’”

Soon enough, the boy was running around the room pretending to be Iron Man and talking to Reavie.

“And he was able then to trust me because he felt strong,” Reavie said.

After seeing how a simple question about superheroes could help him get through to a child, Reavie was inspired to “empower abused children to help in their recovery by introducing that superhero mythology to them.”

He started the nonprofit Put On The Cape A Foundation For Hope in 2019 to do just that. The organization partners with family advocacy centers, which help victims of physical and sexual abuse, to help supply them with superhero toys and T-shirts as well as clothing and food. The nonprofit also provides funding to meet any other needs the advocacy centers may have.

In addition to working with family advocacy centers, the organization partners with the nonprofits Cameo Courage, which brings trained costumed superheroes to children’s hospitals, and Young Entrepreneurs Club, which helps foster, at risk and homeless children.

Put On The Cape A Foundation For Hope receives funding from corporate grants, individual donors and sponsorships from local businesses. The organization also puts on events such as a 5K race, a golf tournament and a car show to raise money.

Reavie, who serves as the CEO and president of the board of directors for the nonprofit, said that the pandemic drastically impacted funding but they were still able to “carry through.”



"We still haven't reached the level of the first year as far as donations, but we will," Reavie said. "And our impact is in [that] we're adding advocacy centers; we're adding groups like the foster care and hospital visits. We're doing more with less, and it still has an impact, which is very cool."

Learn more about Put On The Cape A Foundation For Hope at <https://www.putonthecape.org/>

---

## Science Voices

Lev Horodyskyj said he started the nonprofit Science Voices in 2019 with the goal to "improve equity in digital science education" as well as to "improve education for the Anthropocene."

"There's a geologic era where humans have oversized impacts on Earth's systems," Horodyskyj said. "And we need to be training people who are better stewards of the planet, and that starts with improving science education at all levels using modern technologies."

The organization has taken on multiple technology, education and sustainability projects, but it was not until the pandemic hit that Horodyskyj realized the need for an approach that was digitally focused.

"What became clear during the pandemic was that the digital teaching tools that we needed to do good science education just weren't there," he said. "Everyone pivoted to zoom and that's not the best way for teaching experiential topics or subjects such as science."

Thus, one of Science Voices' projects is Agavi — a digital education platform still in development aimed to be better equipped with teaching such topics and could be accessible to rural and low-resource areas.

The organization also has a partnership program — Greenworks — designed to help students and teachers in Indonesia, Brazil, Ukraine and the United States gain tools and learning techniques in sustainability science.

Learn more about Science Voices at <https://sciencevoices.org/>

---

## **Boxed Up Project**

When Milan Coraggio-Sewell saw her friends and family experiencing grief and loss brought on during the pandemic, she realized she was observing the people she loved dealing with emotions that were all too familiar to her. That's when Coraggio-Sewell became resolved to find a way to help.

"I wanted to help kids handle those same things that I did, because if I had someone to talk to, if I had some resources, I feel like I would have coped in a healthier way," Coraggio-Sewell said.

At age 6, Coraggio-Sewell lost her best friend in a tragic accident. A few years later, her grandparents passed away.

"I didn't know how to cope with those feelings," Coraggio-Sewell said. "I felt angry, upset, confused. I mean, how do you explain to that young of a child that you're never going to see your friends and family again?"

In 2022, the high school student started the Boxed Up Project, a nonprofit that provides "grief toolkits" for children and teens to help them cope with grief and loss.

Coraggio-Sewell worked with grief counselors to determine what items to include in the boxes. The Boxed Up Project provides two types of boxes to its partners: one for ages 5-12 and one for ages 13-17. The boxes are unisex and contain items such as coloring books, journals and bubbles. Each box also includes a cow stuffed animal as a tribute to Coraggio-Sewell's childhood best friend who had given her one before he passed away.

Coraggio-Sewell runs the nonprofit, serving as its founder and CEO, along with two other high school students, Elina Ferrigno, who is the director of operations, and Sinclair Titzck, who is the project coordinator.

The nonprofit has provided over 500 boxes to various organizations across Arizona such as Resolution Copper, Hospice

of the Valley's New Song Center for Grieving Children, Billy's Place, among others.

Learn more about Boxed Up Project at  
<https://www.boxedupproject.org/>

---

## **Harmony Project Phoenix**

Harmony Project Phoenix provides music programs to help support students of all backgrounds. In addition to music programs, the nonprofit is committed to helping provide its students with resources to make higher education more accessible.

"The main focus is to use music as a tool, as vehicle, as a means for social inclusion, for positive youth development," Diogo Pereira, the executive director of the organization, said.

Harmony Project Phoenix has programs for children of all ages, starting at as young as age 3.

Whether a child joins when they're a toddler or a senior in high school, Pereira said, "Once a student starts in the Harmony Project, we will do our best to commit to the child for the whole time."

Harmony Project Phoenix partners with middle and high schools to "help them to build a better musical education program for their students," Pereira said. It also works with Arizona State University to provide monthly bilingual workshops to students and their families on the college admission process.

The organization recently started its American Sign Language choir, where children in the deaf community can sing with their hands.

The organization was incorporated as an independent nonprofit in 2021. However, before that, it had been operating under Tanner Community Development Corporation since 2014.

Pereira said that they are "looking for more people to join our board who have the passion for education, for social inclusion, for music and have some experience being on a board."

Learn more about Harmony Project Phoenix at  
<https://harmonyprojectphx.org/>

---

### **Thinking of starting a nonprofit? Founders offer some advice**

When it comes to starting a nonprofit, passion is key.

Shante Saulsberry, the founder and executive director of Janice's Women's Center, said that drive is paramount, and that "when they say tears and sweat and pain, that is definitely a nonprofit."

"You are literally going to be giving your all to something like this," she said. "And it's going to take everything out of you. That includes financial — and remembering that financial support, even from yourself, is what keeps your nonprofit operating."

There are 23,961 organizations that qualify as tax-exempt under the 501(c)(3) designation in Arizona. And 5,422 of these organizations received their tax-exempt status between January 2019 and May 2022, according to Internal Revenue Service data, which was last updated on June 14.

Jennifer Blair, the director of membership for the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits, encourages anyone looking to start their own nonprofit to research if there are any organizations doing similar work already.

If there are, then it may be more beneficial to work with that nonprofit instead.

"I would say to any new nonprofit: make sure that what you're doing has a very unique spin to it, and that it is an honest expression of the change you want to see in the world," David Simmons, founder and executive director of the UBU Project, said.

For those who decide to start their own organization, there are a variety of resources available to help, such as the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits' free guide, "How to Start a Nonprofit," and law groups that specialize in nonprofit law.

"My advice would be that I would consult with an attorney that is very knowledgeable in nonprofits," Joyce Petrowski, who worked

with Caritas Law Group PC when she founded R.O.S.E. Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly, said. She added that “they're going to make sure that you have everything in place that you need to have in place, and they're going to be able to guide you as well.”

**Allison Vaughn**

Editorial intern

*Phoenix Business Journal*