

# ABHOF grants help bridge the gap in Arkansas' Black communities

By Mya Hall

**D**ue to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame (ABHOF) induction ceremony was postponed until fall 2021. But this small setback has not stopped the impact this organization has on communities across the state.

In September of 1992, Charles Stewart and Patricia Goodwin founded the ABHOF Foundation as a benefit for the Arkansas Regional Minority Business Development Council. The organization's first induction ceremony dates back to October 1993. Since then, more than 150 Arkansans have been inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame. These individuals have been awarded for their many accomplishments in contributing to African American culture.

Among the trailblazers in Arkansas history who are inductees of the ABHOF is Senator Irma Hunter Brown of Little Rock. Brown served 24 years in the Arkansas legislature. She was the first African American woman to have been elected both to the Arkansas House of Representatives and to the Arkansas Senate. She has been described as an agent of change and currently serves the community through her work with the Friends of Haven of Rest Cemetery, a nonprofit group improving the condition and appearance of the historic African American cemetery in Little Rock.


In addition to highlighting the contributions of African American Arkansans, ABHOF also awards grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to assist communities and organizations across Arkansas. The first grant was given in June 2004, and since then the ABHOF Foundation has awarded over \$500,000 in grant funding. These grants helped serve more than 200,000 Arkansans in over 60 counties.

The Ozark Living Newspaper Theatre Company (OLN) and the Hannah Pregnancy Resource Center are two of the many organizations that have benefitted from ABHOF grants. OLN was able to conduct two training events and workshops with juvenile court personnel from around the state, said Producing Artistic Director Adam Frank. "The grant OLN received from

the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame for our juvenile court theater program was like a pebble dropped into the middle of a pond," Frank said. "With the grant, we were able to conduct workshops for at-risk youth and personnel involved with the court systems in Faulkner County and the surrounding area."

The events focused on basic comedy improv and Boal-based Theatre of the Oppressed training. After receiving the training, attendees disseminated and implemented what they learned in their respective communities. OLN also worked with graduates of the program in Cleburne County to support them in the creation of their own juvenile court theater workshops in Heber Springs. The grant allowed OLN to create a transferable restorative justice theater model for youth, a project OLN hopes to continue post-COVID-19.

The Hannah Pregnancy Resource Center is another organization that received an ABHOF Foundation grant. Executive Director Paula Williams shared that ABHOF grants helped her organization meet their clients' needs. Their three centers in south Arkansas provide options for teen pregnancy, unexpected pregnancies or expectant mothers in need of assistance.

ABHOF grants provide the resources needed to positively impact African American and other underserved communities. To apply for an Arkansas Black Hall of Fame grant, applicants must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, hospital, public school or government agency that is eligible for tax-exempt status and is located in the state of Arkansas. Learn more about the ABHOF and available grants at [www.arblackhalloffame.org](http://www.arblackhalloffame.org). 



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