Kids From Wisconsin Annual Report

2019-2020

Leading in Crisis – Re-Imagining the Future from Within

What is the mission of the Kids From Wisconsin in a year without a show?! In April, the board of directors made the difficult decision to cancel the tour season. We held open the possibility of preparing and performing during the Wisconsin State Fair until fair leaders also felt it not safe. As you'll see in this report, we continued to serve our mission, but in a dramatically different way.

SHOWMANSHIP – Instead of a live show, virtual rehearsals gave way to an opportunity to perform and be seen. We increased our online and digital presence through a virtual video shown on many platforms. We launched a weekly online watch party, featuring videos of all of the years of Kids performances that were recorded.

LEADERSHIP – In lieu of "Realize Your Dream" workshops in cities across the state, a "Realize Your Dream at Home" video series was created. High-quality teaching videos received significant online viewership and kept the performers in the public eye, despite having no live shows.

PARTNERSHIP – Helping local civic groups hold live shows in their communities was deferred. Instead, we developed a 12-week music residency for Milwaukee elementary students and an after-school program for middle schoolers. An impressive curriculum that meets Wisconsin state standards has been presented to Milwaukee-area schools as an option to provide music education free for schools that don't have programs.

The creativity and perseverance of our staff and troupe were on full display, making sure we have an impact and fulfill our mission, even in a pandemic. Thankfully, we have maintained a positive financial position, which we recap inside. It has been a difficult year for so many. On behalf of the Kids From Wisconsin, I want to wish you well, and sincerely thank you for your continued support.

Tim Riesterer | President

TIM RIESTERER PRESIDENT
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MICHAEL D. SANDER EX OFFICIO
Executive Director, Kids From Wisconsin

TINA WEISS EX OFFICIO
Managing Director, Kids From Wisconsin

Thank you, Tina!

There are really no words to describe how much Tina Weiss means to the Kids From Wisconsin. When she became the executive director in late 2013, the organization was struggling financially. The board even contemplated closing the program. Since then, Tina has provided the vision, passion, and commitment needed to bring Kids back from the brink and put us on a trajectory for long-term, continued success. And, most recently, she helped us navigate a pandemic that canceled an entire season.

The good news you see in this annual report is a testimony to her leadership. As she takes on the new role of managing director, Tina will provide continued mentorship for Michael Sander as our new executive director and continue to help ensure a bright future for the program. We are fortunate and grateful for all you've done, Tina. Thank you!

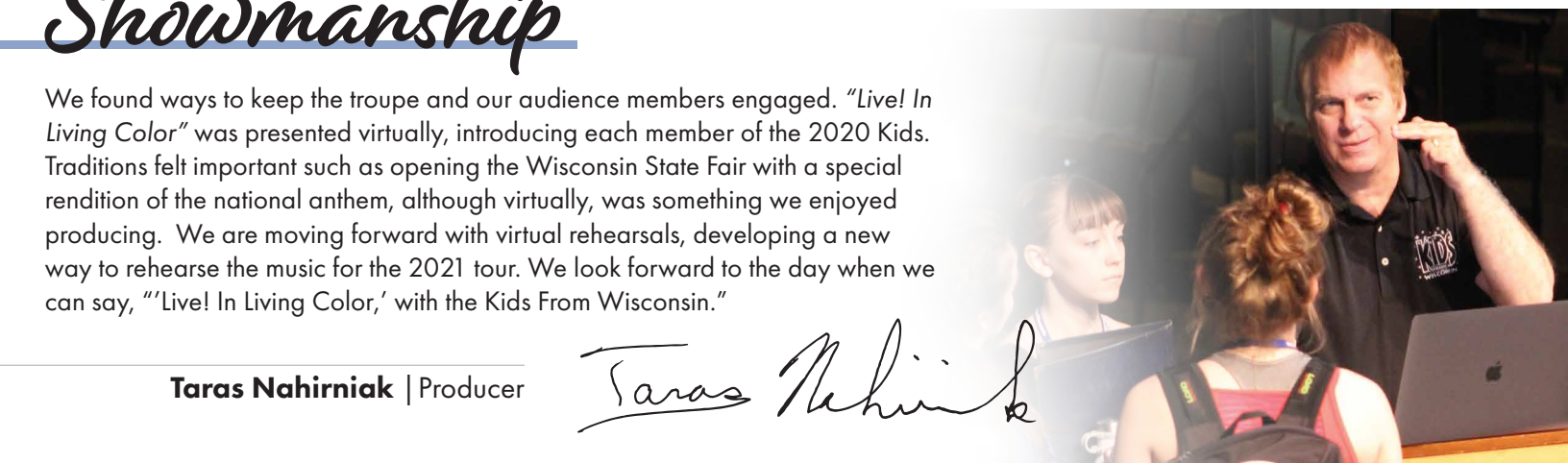
"Kids From Wisconsin – major building block for me as a young woman who discovered that she loved to perform. To be surrounded by other artists my age from around the state who like to do what I like to do and to get to make art with them to share. There is nothing like it."

Sarah Ellis | 2006-2008 Alumna, Producer MT Shorts, Actress, Performer

Showmanship

We found ways to keep the troupe and our audience members engaged. *"Live! In Living Color"* was presented virtually, introducing each member of the 2020 Kids. Traditions felt important such as opening the Wisconsin State Fair with a special rendition of the national anthem, although virtually, was something we enjoyed producing. We are moving forward with virtual rehearsals, developing a new way to rehearse the music for the 2021 tour. We look forward to the day when we can say, "'Live! In Living Color,' with the Kids From Wisconsin."

Taras Nahirniak | Producer



NEW Leadership

I've heard it said that you're only unproductive by the standards of the world we lived in months ago — and that world is gone. When I was selected to help lead this group, I never imagined the Kids would not be given an opportunity to perform. But adapting out of necessity has been rewarding in many ways. I stated early on that 2020 would the year of the alumni. From watch parties, roundtable discussions and master classes, our alumni have proven to be our best resource and I look forward to deepening these connections.

I have big shoes to fill. With the previous executive director serving as my mentor, I see a bright light at the end of this tunnel. As I continue to grow in this role, building community partnerships, sharing talents and developing cultural diversity will be my driving force. I want to lead in a way that develops a more inclusive, emotionally fulfilling, and intellectual experience for the organization and our partners.

I've also heard it said that if you change nothing, nothing will change. I am very humbled and excited to be part of this change. I started in the Kids family as a performer years ago. And now I'm ready to help shape the organization for future generations to enjoy.

Michael D. Sander

Michael D. Sander | Executive Director

VIRTUAL Partnership

Peggy Morgan Strimple | Community Enrichment Coordinator

If we had to pick a blessing from this year, it was the gift of time. When stepping back and examining our outreach program, how do we take it to another level to do good? Let's take the time to reconnect with existing relationships and create new partnerships with a community enrichment focus.

First let's start with our 2020 troupe and give them a platform to spread their joys and aspirations. Born, Realize Your Dream at Home.

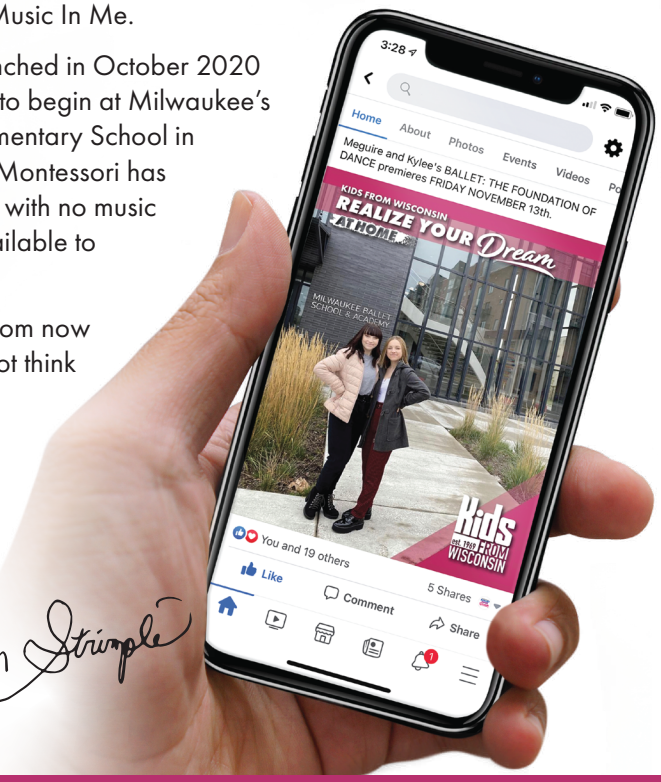
Second, we have 900+ alumni who have gifts and experiences to share that would be valued with our community. Born, Realize your Dream-Master Classes.

Finally, every child deserves to be exposed to music. Its creation, its value, and its importance in everyday life. To hear schools, in our own backyard, are not able to provide music to children, we quickly jumped to action. Born, Realize Your Dream-Music In Me.

Music In Me was launched in October 2020 with a pilot residency to begin at Milwaukee's Craig Montessori Elementary School in January 2021. Craig Montessori has 98% students of color with no music curricula currently available to these students.

No doubt, 10 years from now we'll look back and not think of this time as an interruption, but more importantly a pivotal evolution for our organization's partnership.

Peggy Morgan Strimple



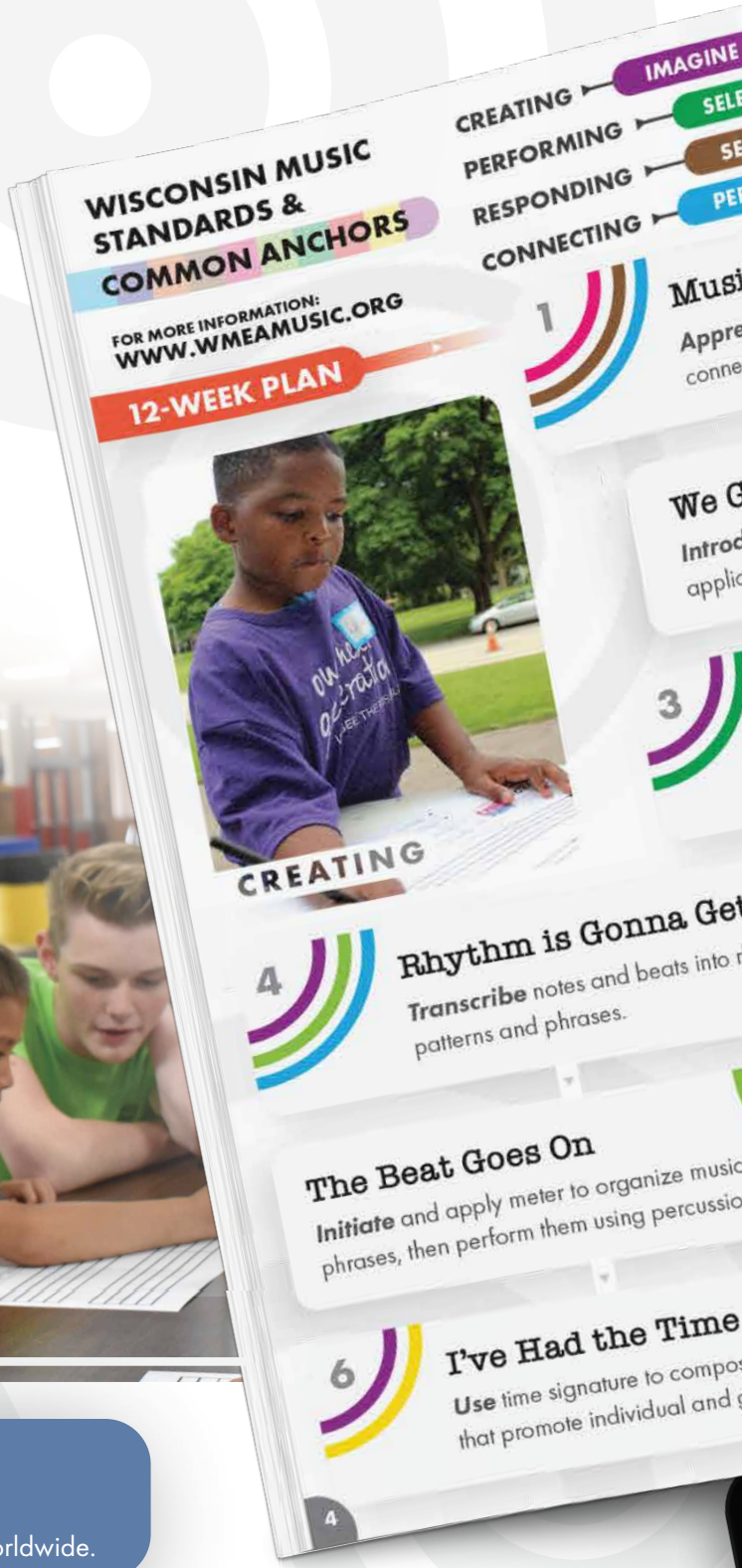
KIDS FROM WISCONSIN

REALIZE YOUR Dream

MUSIC IN ME

Our largest project began in late 2019 with the news of MPS schools not able to offer music curriculum to every student in Milwaukee. The problem has existed for many years, with the largest deficit at the elementary level.

> **"Here is a program to celebrate! Music can be life-changing and Music in Me guides students in using the power of music to learn and grow in new ways that can change their lives. It enhances the experiences of a student that can lead to a more well-rounded education. A high-quality program that assures every child has access to quality music education in their lives."**
>
> ***S. Jay Kennedy, PhD***
> Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice Provost, Berklee College of Music



MASTER CLASSES

Free virtual classes offered once a month by alumni and professionals worldwide.

"Not only did I get incredibly useful advice and knowledge but also great resources to take the next steps in my career!"

A $5000 scholarship is being offered to MPS graduates who will take their music education further into teaching or performance through their next steps in education. We are excited to make this connection with the music students of MPS.

AT HOME

Short, creative tutorial videos produced by the 2020 performers. Videos are designed for home learning and fun fillers in virtual classrooms.

"We loved seeing the dream team this summer... Brock watched them all! I miss you all so very much but am happy to hear music and see the Realize Your Dream At Home posts from Kids."

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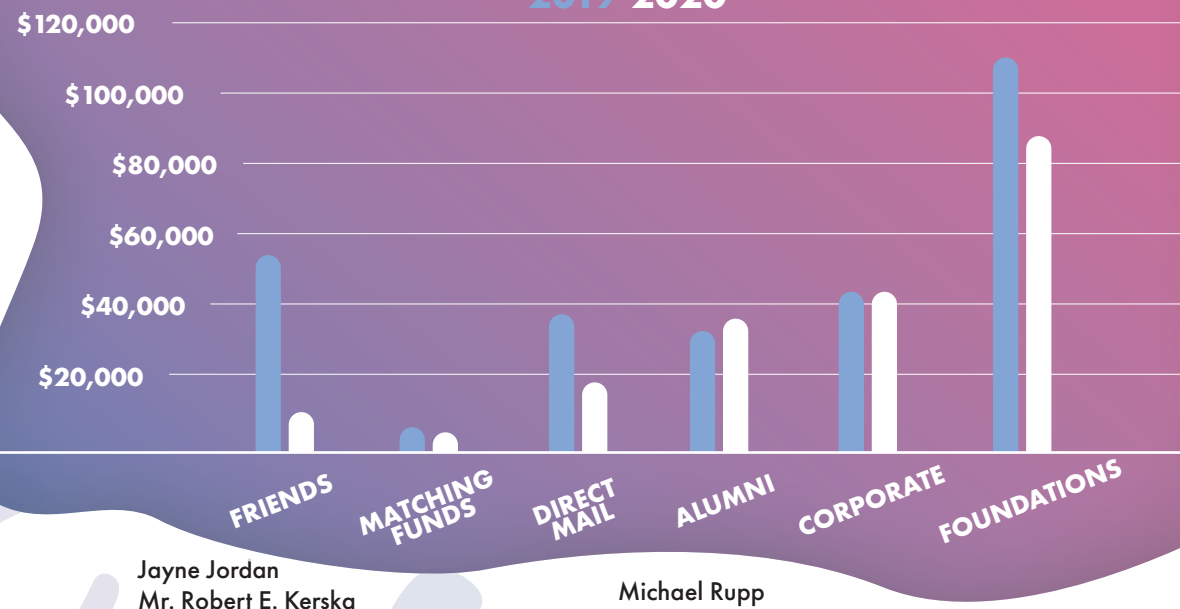

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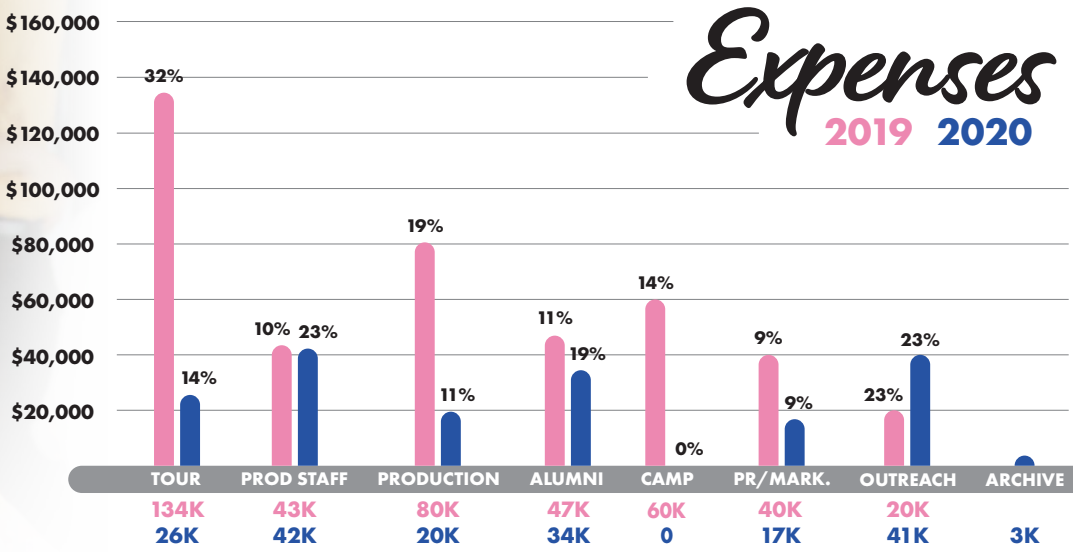
The Shields Family in memory of *Megan Shields' beloved uncle, **Jeff Gauss**
Althea Kammer in honor of **Robert Benkoski**



Financial Focus

KIDS BY THE NUMBERS

Kids From Wisconsin is a non-profit organization which gains its revenue from performance fees, corporate funding, foundation grants and personal donations. The pandemic hit the organization with a punch just as the 2020 tour was ready to roll out as one of the busiest tour seasons on record.

Performance income along with at-show contributions from individuals were lost.

The savings from canceled tour expenses allowed us to increase community enrichment programs that help the Kids From Wisconsin stay connected with their following during the pandemic.

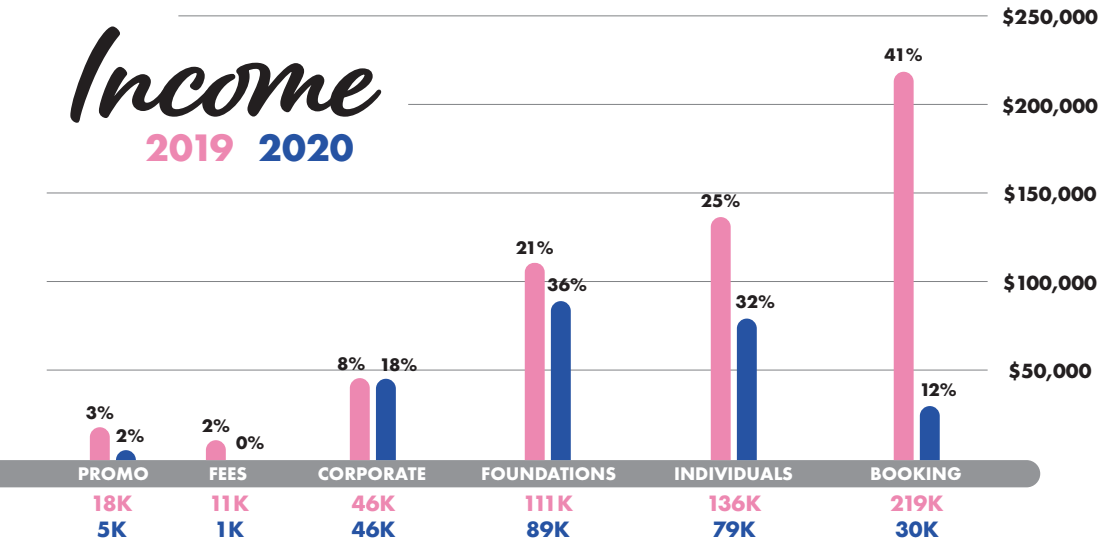
Realize Your Dream implemented weekly online programming. Alumni involvement reached historically high levels with weekly "Watch Parties" of previous years' shows, ZOOM reunions and roundtable discussions. These efforts drove increased awareness and donations from our alumni family base.

In 2016, the Board designated funds to establish The Kids from Wisconsin Endowment Fund. Reserves can be used for operating needs at the discretion of the Board of Directors, subject to the terms of the Fund. The monies are on deposit and managed by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, whose terms mirror those of the Kids From Wisconsin Endowment Fund Policy.

FOCUS FORWARD | 2021

We continue to monitor recommendations from the CDC and the State as developments evolve concerning the coronavirus. Our organization cares about the health and safety of our troupe members, staff, audience and communities across the state. We understand that health, work and travel require personal decisions that individuals must make for themselves as we all strive to get through these times together.

Our success as a vibrant organization entering its 53rd year, principally depends on strong, ongoing and recurring financial support from people like you. Your contributions greatly enhance our ability to achieve our mission year-round.



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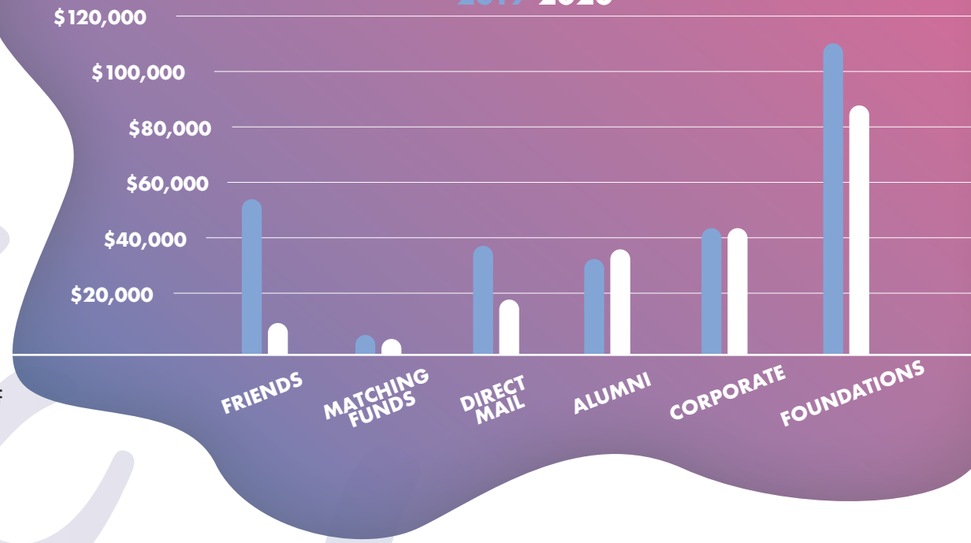

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Our largest project was born in late 2019 with the news of MPS schools not able to offer music curriculum to every student in Milwaukee. The problem has existed for many years, with the largest deficit in the elementary levels.

Every child deserves to be exposed to music. Its creation, its value, and its importance to everyday life. To hear schools, in our own backyard, are not able to provide music to all children helped us to understand the disparity in the Milwaukee Public Schools and lack of applicants from this area. We put a team together to device curriculum with the Wisconsin Standards for Music incorporated into 12 sessions. Born Realize Your Dream-Music In Me.

The program was launched in October 2020 with a pilot residency to begin at Milwaukee's Craig Montessori Elementary School in January 2021. This MPS Montessori school is composed of 98% students of color with no music curricula currently available to these students.

Realize Your Dream programs are a constant evolution and intersection for teachers and learners, where workshops, residences and classroom sessions are designed for all age groups and ability levels.

KIDS FROM WISCONSIN

REALIZE YOUR Dream

MASTER CLASSES

"Not only did I get incredibly useful advice and knowledge but also great resources to take the next steps in my career!"

KIDS FROM WISCONSIN

REALIZE YOUR Dream

AT HOME

"We loved seeing the dream team this summer... Brock watched them all! I miss you all so very much but am happy to hear music and see the Realize Your Dream At Home posts from Kids."

Thank you, Tina!

There are really no words to describe how much Tina Weiss means to the Kids From Wisconsin. When she became the Executive Director in late 2013, the organization was struggling financially. The board even contemplated closing the program. Since, then, Tina has provided the vision, passion, and commitment needed to bring Kids back from the brink and put us on a trajectory for long-term, continued success. And, most recently, she helped us navigate a pandemic that canceled an entire season.

The good news you see in this annual report is a testimony to her leadership. As she takes on the new role of Managing Director, Tina will provide continued mentorship for Michael Sander as our new Executive Director and continue to help ensure a bright future for the program. We are fortunate and grateful for all you've done, Tina. Thank you!

"Kids From Wisconsin - major building block for me as a young woman who discovered that she loved to perform. To be surrounded by other artists my age from around the state who lie to do what I like to do and to get to make art with them to share. There is nothing like it."

Sarah Ellis | 2006-2008 Alumna, Producer MT Shorts, Actress, Performer

Showmanship

We found ways to keep the troupe and our audience members engaged. *"Live! In Living Color"* was presented virtually, introducing each member of the 2020 Kids. Traditions felt important such as opening the State Fair with a special rendition of the National Anthem, although virtually, was something we enjoyed producing. We are moving forward with virtual rehearsals, developing a new way to rehearse the music for the 2021 tour. We look forward to the day when we can say, "Live! In Living Color," with...the Kids From Wisconsin"

Taras Nahirniak | Producer

NEW Leadership

I've heard it said that you're only unproductive by the standards of the world we lived in months ago -- and that world is gone.When I was selected to help lead this group, I never imagined the Kids would not be given an opportunity to perform. But adapting out of necessity has been rewarding in many ways. I stated early on that 2020 would the year of the alumni. From watch parties, roundtable discussions and master classes, our alumni have proven to be our best resource and I look forward to deepening these connections.

I have big shoes to fill. With the previous executive director serving as my mentor, I see a bright light at the end of this tunnel. As I continue to grow in this role, building community partnerships, sharing talents and developing cultural diversity will be my driving force. I want to lead in a way that develops a more inclusive, emotionally fulfilling, and intellectual experience for the organization and our partners.

I've also heard it said that if you change nothing, nothing will change. I am very humbled and excited to be part of this change. I started in the Kids family as a performer years ago. And now I'm ready to help shape the organization for future generations to enjoy.

Michael D. Sander | Executive Director

VIRTUAL

Partnership

Peggy Morgan Strimple | Community Enrichment Coordinator

If we had to pick a blessing from this year, it was the gift of time. When stepping back and examining our outreach program, how do we take it to another level to do good? Let's take the time to reconnect with existing relationships and create new partnerships with a community enrichment focus.

First let's start with our 2020 Troupe and give them a platform to spread their joys and aspirations. Born-Realize Your Dream at Home.

Second, we have 900+ Alumni who have gifts and experiences to share that would be valued with our community. Born-Realize your Dream-Master Classes.

Finally, every child deserves to be exposed to music. Its creation, its value, and its importance in everyday life. To hear schools, in our own backyard, are not able to provide music to children, we quickly jumped to action. Born, Realize Your Dream-Music In Me.

The program was launched in October 2020 with a pilot residency to begin at Milwaukee's Craig Montessori Elementary School in January. Craig Montessori has 98% students of color with no music curricula currently available vto these students.

A $5000 scholarship is being offered to MPS graduates who will take their music education further into teaching or performance through their next steps in education. We are excited to make this connection with the music students of MPS.

No doubt, 10 years from now we'll look back and not think of this time as an interruption, but more importantly a pivotal evolution for our organization's partnership.