

JUST BECAUSE Overview

The Spartanburg County Foundation's Just Because initiative was started in 2014 as an opportunity to spontaneously and innovatively use a tactic of "ambush philanthropy" to bring awareness to issues throughout the County and highlight nonprofit organizations that are working diligently to meet those needs. It was also created to provide Foundation staff and the community-at-large an opportunity to see the Spartanburg County Foundation doing what it does best – giving back.

Just Because is a unique and creative way for the Foundation to partner with donors and other funding institutions, to leverage resources, to award nonprofit organizations for their efforts, and to build awareness about the important issues in all areas of the County. The organizations that are selected are not typically organizations that receive a lot of visibility, but they work diligently to meet a pressing need in Spartanburg County.

Just Because is a component of the Foundation's Proactive Grantmaking Program. Staff identifies organizations to receive the funding based upon the work that they do, geographic location, and the Indicator Area that is being addressed. Grants may be awarded to meet specific needs or given as unrestricted dollars, which enables a nonprofit to use the funding for operational purposes if that is the desire of the organization. Just Because is meant to be thoughtful and strategic while also being innovative, spontaneous, and fun.

This idea was developed in 2014, during Foundation staff's evaluation of the importance and impact of smaller grants. Through best practice research, staff learned that some foundations award smaller grants, ranging from \$1,000-2,500, but typically they were given in conjunction with a major anniversary or milestone for the foundation. Building upon what was learned, staff started exploring the idea of awarding smaller grants to recognize those organizations who were in the trenches addressing issues and to also show the important impact that smaller grants have on nonprofits serving our community.

The first Just Because Day took place in the fall 2014 during Community Foundation Week. Staff leveraged the new concept around a national recognition week for community foundations across the country to draw additional attention to the important role that community foundations play in the communities they serve. All Foundation staff boarded the "Just Because" bus and began making surprise visits to area nonprofits. This immediately peaked media attention and coverage.

The Foundation's Just Because grantmaking program continues to garner interest from donors, nonprofits, the community-at-large, and other funders both locally and nationally. Not only does it bring awareness to those organizations doing great work, but it also demonstrates the important impact of grant sizes and shows the power of collective giving.

Individuals, families, and groups may contribute to the Just Because Fund and future Just Because grantmaking efforts through the Foundation's website, spcf.org.

