RIBS Report 2021

Submitted by Valerie Tutson

**Programs:**

This past year RIBS kicked off January with its **23rd Annual FUNDA FEST:** A Celebration of Black Storytelling, which took place Jan 23-31, 2021. This time it was VIRTUAL. We had 43 artists participate in 12 programs over 9 days. We had tellers and audience from the US, the UK, Sierra Leone, Uganda and South Africa. We reached over 8000 people across the globe. We were forced to be creative, and it allowed us to be collaborative and inclusive of more tellers than we ever could have done in person. We even had NABS Liar’s Contest winners and MC featured at our Liar’s Contest!

**FUNDA STORY CAMP:** RIBS presented online storytelling camps during February and April vacations: Storytelling Is FUN, for ages 5-11, and From HipHop to Hamilton for Middle Schoolers. During the summer, RIBS was able to present FUNDA CAMP in person. For 3 hours a day, 20 children between the ages of 5-13 met with RIBS tellers and teaching artists at the Southside Cultural Center. They learned to tell 2 group stories: Bru Rabbit and the Big Wind, and Zomo the Rabbit. They made masks, and did creative dance and performed for their families and friends. 10 students joined RIBS tellers at a performance at the Doris Duke Mansion in Newport.

**Dance and Story Bridge Project:** RIBS wrapped up this Intercultural Project with the Laotian Community Center left over from the pandemic with live performances by the girls, the creation of one podcast and an opportunity to learn some South Asian dance at an online and in-person workshop.

**Sunday Storytelling Series:** Once a month on Sundays February-July, RIBS tellers presented free online storytelling programs via zoom.

Rhode Island Department of Education: (RIDE) Enrichment Programs: RIBS presented **Black History Stories Before Bed for** 4 nights at the end of August, via zoom.

**Organization:** RIBS had a new, young board that helped shift the organization this year, by increasing the budget to include paid staff, and by helping with fundraising.

As a result, we brought in $167, 000 of our $201,000 (stretch) budget. We spent $119,000.

This has been a game-changer for us! 2 staff got paid part-time and are moving toward 1 fulltime position,.

**FUNDRAISING and Development**: General Fund for operations, including staff

NEFA: (New England Foundation of the Arts) New England Arts Resiliency Grant (NEAR)-($25,000)

United Way Grant: $50,000/year for the next 2 years

RICharge: $8000

United Way Technical Assistance: $5000

Dexter Grant: $2400 (rent)

Program Grants

Newport County fund $10,000: Fully Ourselves: Story of Black Tennis

Providence Shelter for Colored Children: $7000: Funda Story Camp and Funda in the Schools

RI Foundation Community Grant: Community Flavors project : $10,000

Most of our money comes from grants. We are fortunate that there is a concerted effort now to support Black (and BIPOC) organizations and non-profits. This has been key to support the growing staff needs to support the increased programs.

We participated in a 1-day fundraiser called 401Gives. It is for any/all nonprofits in the state. We set a goal of $5000, and raised nearly $8000. We had never raised that much from so many individual donors.

We also had nearly $10,000 in ticket revenue for FUNDA FEST. We have NEVER made that much money before.

**So, highlights in a nutshell:**

Raising money to pay staff and support the work of the organization

Providing platform and payments to over 43 artists during FUNDA FEST alone; having other opportunities for RIBS tellers to be paid for their work via the grants.

Presenting regular online storytelling

Working with youth during all the vacations, seeding our /a Youth program for growing future tellers.

**Challenges:**

There is a LOT of work!

Need to have a marketing coordinator:

Consistent youth engagement

How to nurture young storytellers, meaning also adults who are “young tellers”

How to effectively bring new people into RIBS… as tellers, on the Board, etc.

We know that the money that is flowing now will not continue forever, so how do we adjust/adapt/take advantage of the riches AND “live below our means” so we can not only be sustainable, but so we Thrive.

Date: October 14, 2021