

The Arizona Lottery, Fostering Change for Kids in Need

Support of Recycle Your Bicycle enables lifeline for kids in foster care

by Tyler Butler

► If a worldwide pandemic has taught our society anything, it is the value of access. Access to everything from tissue paper and masks to food or even to bicycles. Items we've become accustomed to having easy access to have more recently become quite the commodity. While providing freedom, fun and an activity is at a premium these days, simple pleasures such as riding a bicycle have become a priority and a luxury simultaneously. Whether what's wanted is a commuter or fitness bike, though, both are in limited supply.

It is these types of community problems that the Arizona Lottery is committed to assisting with. The Arizona Lottery has been raising funds and awareness for causes in need since 1981. Through its diligent efforts, it has generated more than \$4.4 billion in net funding in support of programs that help to improve the quality of life for the people in Arizona. This support has impacted programs in higher education, economic development, environmental conservation, and health and human services. And, considering the uncertain times we are living in, these valuable resources have never been as critical for our community as they are right now.

Through an existing partnership, the Arizona Lottery has committed its efforts to support the Recycle Your Bicycle program. The RYB program comes to our community thanks to the Arizona Association for Foster & Adoptive Parents. RYB's mission is to provide bicycles to children and youth in foster care. Throughout the 10-year history of the program, RYB has provided more than 10,000 bicycles for foster families. "The Arizona Lottery exists to do good in our communities. Supporting our most vulnerable, our foster children, has huge impact for Arizona.," says Gregg Edgar, executive director of the Arizona Lottery.

This support could not come at more opportune time. According to the N.P.D. Group, a market research company, sales of children's bikes has gone up 59%. With fewer resources than ever, many families simply cannot afford bikes. For children and youth in foster care, bikes can serve as a lifeline. Bikes provide freedom, exercise, transportation to work and school, and a chance to have fun.

"Our work with Recycle Your Bicycle goes back to July of 2019, when we learned about their work to benefit foster and adopted children by refurbishing and gifting them bikes that they would otherwise not be able to own," says Chris Rogers, Arizona Lottery deputy director of marketing and products. "There was a real connection there, for us, as proceeds from Arizona Lottery ticket sales fund Court Appointed Special Advocates, which trains volunteers to speak on behalf of foster children in the court system and advocates for them during this difficult time in their lives."



"This year, Recycle Your Bicycle took an extra meaningful turn with the onset of COVID-19," says Joe Jacober, bike coordinator for Recycle Your Bicycle. "Thanks to the support of the Arizona Lottery, we gave hundreds of bikes to children in foster care with no other way to receive a bike. We are grateful to the AZ Lottery and all Arizonans for their support of children in foster care."

The Arizona Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents is the parent organization to RYB and it provides essential support to foster and adoptive families. Naturally, there are costs involved to the program and that is where the Arizona Lottery was able to step in. In 2019, it allocated a \$5,000 sponsorship to help buy parts and supplies to refurbish these bikes and, during its live annual holiday social media event last year, it raised another \$20,000 for RYB to continue that work.

"This year, given the pressure that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on bicycle manufacturers and parts suppliers, and the difficulties of maintaining social distancing while reconditioning these used bikes, RYB was facing almost insurmountable challenges in getting bikes to these kids," says Rogers. "Bicycles are so important to these children, who have lost so much, because they give them a sense of normalcy and freedom, as well as healthy outdoor exercise at a time when it's needed most."

Through its Gives Back sponsorship program, the Arizona Lottery was able to step up and give RYB \$18,000 to purchase 300 new bikes and helmets, and then distribute them to foster and adoptive families across Maricopa County. Given the enormous and lasting impact this work has already had on hundreds, if not thousands, of foster and adopted children, it has been an unmitigated success that will be felt for years to come. ■

Arizona Lottery arizonalottery.com

Recycle Your Bicycle recycleyourbicycleaz.com



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