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Bigfork's ACES After School Receives \$30,000 Grant from Laura Grace Barrett Living Arts Foundation Fund

Helena, Mont., October 30, 2018 – ACES (Arts, Community, Education, Sports) After School, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in Bigfork, received a \$30,000 grant from the Laura Grace Barrett Living Arts Foundation, a fund recently established at the Montana Community Foundation, Inc. (MCF). The grant will be used to support ACES' programs designed to encourage each child to pursue and achieve their highest personal potential through academic and cultural enrichment, and community and family engagement.

"The board of directors and myself would like to thank Laura Barrett and her family for the generous donation to ACES. I have known Laura for the past 35-plus years and have loved her and her giving, artistic spirit. We have decided to honor Laura's memory by naming our art room at ACES the 'Laura Barrett Art Room,'" said Cathy Hay, ACES director.

The Laura Grace Barrett Living Arts Foundation Fund is dedicated to supporting ideas and projects that create opportunities for arts, culture, entertainment, education, and the general enrichment of life, foremost in the immediate Bigfork area, but also to nearby regions.

"Laura was passionately committed to building community. To do that, one starts at the beginning – with the education of children. Bigfork ACES is a stellar program providing quality after-school care for children who otherwise might be going home to an empty house," said Kevin Barrett, spokesman for the Laura Grace Barrett Living Arts Foundation.

Born in Froid, Montana, in 1930, Laura was raised on a wheat farm, which she left at the age of 16 to attend the University of Montana. She worked as schoolteacher in San Francisco, after which the bright and beautiful Laura became a stewardess for Pan American Airways. There she met Jim Barrett, and the couple married and moved to Los Angeles and had five children.

The care of her family did not temper Laura's passion for the arts. She taught art classes and worked to develop community art programs. She wrote and directed her play "Garden of Pleasure," which was performed at UCLA. In 1969, the suburban Laura created a cross-culture art cooperative with her inner-city friend Pauline.

Laura's farming roots served the family well when her husband expressed interest in an agricultural project. Laura was 100 percent for getting the family back to the land. Laura and Jim founded Chateau Montelena in Calistoga, California. Quickly, their 1973 Chardonnay won the landmark Paris tasting of 1976, catapulting the winery to fame.

Jim and Laura went their separate ways in 1977. However, Laura never gave up on the dream of a family winery, maintaining her ownership and making significant contributions to the continued success of Chateau Montelena. Laura's memoir of the early Montelena journey is titled "What is More Real Than a Dream?"

In 1980, the unattended Laura caught the attention of another Mr. Barrett: Jack Barrett, the plumber. Laura and Jack were married in 1984. By 1986, they moved to Bigfork, Montana, where Laura's creative, idea-generating engine coupled with Jack's practical knowledge to create Bridge Street Gallery and Wine Café and Restaurant.

In 2010, Laura was diagnosed with cancer. She bravely endured surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. Laura handled these events as bumps in the road on the way to her destination. With her diminished health, Laura's resolve to accomplish became even more fervent. The dynamic duo of Laura and Jack started Collage Gallery of Fine Art in Bigfork in 2014. After Jack passed away in Mexico in March 2016, Laura adjusted and kept moving. She traveled to Cuba in March 2017. Laura continued to work on her memoirs, poetry, and artwork. Finally, Laura developed a charitable foundation to support the arts. Laura died on July 20, 2017.

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About Montana Community Foundation

Montana Community Foundation's (MCF) mission is to cultivate a culture of giving so Montana communities can flourish. Founded in 1988, MCF manages more than \$100 million in assets and administers more than 1,100 philanthropic funds and planned gifts. MCF's accreditation through the Council on Foundations' National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations ensures MCF complies with the strictest standards in gift administration and grantmaking. Since its founding, MCF has reinvested more than \$41 million in Montana through grants to charitable organizations and causes across the state. MCF serves as a center for philanthropy in Montana, working with donors, charitable organizations and communities to provide simple and effective ways to give back to Montana.

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