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Giving back to the community one shrimp boot, toilet brush and 'Pyg' at a time

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Krewe of Carrollton member helps Krewe of Arc decorate signature shrimp boots.

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Advocate Staff photo by SOPHIA GERMER

In a bright room decorated with a mural made of Mardi Gras beads, workers dug into glitter, confetti and markers, transforming shrimp boots into coveted parade throws.

For the past two years, the Krewe of Carrollton has partnered with about 30 clients of the Arc of Greater New Orleans to decorate the signature mini-shrimp boots it hands out during its parade, coming up Sunday. The Arc serves adults with development and intellectual disabilities.

It's one of a number of efforts by local krewes to harness the energy of Mardi Gras to benefit good causes in the community.

“I was asked to find a way for clients to do something outside of Arc in the evening and weekends,” said Arc’s Director of Transportation Milton Batiste, who was busy glittering boots at the event in early February. He and the clients came up with the Krewe of Arc, which, he said is “like their own little club. They pay dues, have fundraisers to raise money for movies and road trips.”

Carrollton supplies boots, markers and glitter; the Arc clients provide the creativity. Each boot is signed by the maker, and a card detailing the program is tucked inside.

Carrollton members are assessed an extra fee for the 1,200 boots the Arc members decorate. That money goes to support the group's programs.

The Krewe of Pygmalion partnered this Carnival with Magnolia Community Services to help glitter and glitz small plastic pigs. The colorful "Pygs" will be distributed at the parade Saturday.

A krewe member who has a child at Magnolia suggested it, said Pygmalion representative Pam Florek. Magnolia, like Arc, serves the developmentally disabled. The krewe gives the organization a donation for decorating the pygs.

The Krewe of Tucks has kept Magnolia clients busy for six years, dressing up plungers and brushes, said Tucks captain Lloyd Frischhertz. This year, they'll focus on the brushes, which are coded and numbered with the hope that parade-goers will share pictures online.

Tucks purchases all materials for the toilet brush throws. The krewe pays the Magnolia clients for their work, under an arrangement OK'd by the U.S. Department of Labor.

But the partnerships don't end with work for hire. On Feb. 7, Frischhertz and the 2019 Tucks King Billy Eckert and Queen Karen Ribaul appeared in regal Carnival attire at a special celebration at Magnolia Community Services, where they met with Magnolia clients putting the finishing touches on the brushes. Everyone participated in a second-line through the campus and, of course, king cake was served.

Frischhertz is also in charge of the Tucks Foundation, launched this year to help fund more philanthropic ventures on the krewe's busy agenda.

For Arc, teaming up with Carrollton was a way to work “from a hands-on approach, or ‘boots on the ground’ if you will,” said krewe member Christian Moises. “And partnering with an organization that also loves and supports Mardi Gras was the perfect fit.” Arc is also known for its bead and recycling program.

“This has been an amazing partnership that has forged new friendships among our members and theirs,” Moises said.

Carnival krewes and marching groups give back

There are a number of krewes and dance troupes that have started foundations, donate time and money to local nonprofits or host benefits to support a nonprofit.

Krewes:

Krewe of Iris Operation Bloom: This is the charitable component of the Krewe of Iris, collecting donations to benefit organizations including Hotel Hope, Animal Rescue of New Orleans, New Orleans Police Department, New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation and Hager's House.

Krewe of Hermes Beyond the Parade: This group is the krewe's philanthropic arm and in the past has funded organizations that deal with public safety issues, including New Orleans Police Department, the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation and the New Orleans Emergency Medical Services Foundation.

Krewe de Lune: The krewe's Lunar Lagniappe has benefitted American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, Youth Empowerment Project and

New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice/Congress of Day Laborers. This year, the party will be in the spring and proceeds will benefit Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response, which provides support, education and advocacy.

The krewe's own dance troupe, the Cosmonaughties, performs at benefits.

Krewe of Muses: Members can contribute to the Muses Foundation, managed by the Greater New Orleans Foundation. The donations are used to support local charities.

The krewe also sponsors other charitable programs and events throughout the year, such as a student cup decorating contest that awards the winning student's school \$1,000 for its art program.

Pro Bono Publico: In 2006, Rex founded Pro Bono Publico, which takes its name from the krewe's motto, "For the public good." After Hurricane Katrina, members worked on a number of initiatives, and they are now focusing on revitalizing the city's public schools and the organizations that support them. At a ceremony in January at the Rex den, the foundation

announced \$1 million in grants to 68 recipients, bringing the cumulative grant total to more than \$7.5 million through 12 grant cycles.

Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club: This group's presence in the community is year-round, with its Toys for Tots campaign and gift basket giveaway during the holidays and support of education with providing funds for local schools and Zulu maid scholarships.

Marching/dance troupes

Camel Toe Lady Steppers: The annual Toe Down benefit supports the Roots of Music, an organization designed to develop the musical skills of New Orleans' elementary school students.

Pussyfooters: The group raises money throughout the year, but its main benefit is the Blush Ball, which benefits the Metropolitan Center for Women and Children.

NOLA Organ Grinders: The dance group organizes the Summer Blood Drive: Everyone Gets Lei'd, which features a lineup of dance troupes. The Organ Grinders partner with the

Blood Center of New Orleans for the blood drive and raise money for the New Orleans Musician' Clinic and Assistance Foundation.

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