

**“Pledged to the Health of the Company”** takes on a whole new meaning in light of a global pandemic!

That’s the tag line of the non-profit charity most renfaire folks know simply as RESCU. In any other year in California, you hear about RESCU at Morning Meetings from Kat or Sue. You probably drop a bill into the hat of a generous performer offering a special show for the benefit of RESCU. You likely see signs posted backstage at faire for an upcoming RESCU Rally. The lively fundraising events are a highlight of faire season at most shows. You attend the Rally, knowing it would be entertaining—live auctions usually are! Maybe you donate something to be auctioned off. Maybe you volunteer to work a silent auction table. Maybe you bid on cool stuff and hope to be a lucky winner. Perhaps you just go to hang out with your friends. However you spend that Rally night, you have a blast. But, this year, none of that can happen. This is the year of no faire.

In 2019, RESCU held over twenty RESCU Rallies, nationwide. It was the recipient of dozens of private “for the benefit of” events. Funds were raised at bake sales and car washes, Health Fairs and talent shows. At one faire, RESCU even has its own booth presenting brown bag auctions and swag as a gift for those donating. But, not this year. This is the year of no faire.

Since 2003, The RESCU Foundation has existed side by side with Renaissance festivals, providing health and wellness programs and financial aid for anyone with a renfaire pass. It is well known that our community has a history of taking care of its own. Prior to the formation of RESCU, when a friend needed help with a medical bill, someone would pass a special hat, or walk around explaining the situation and asking for donations. In some cases, this was effective. But, sometimes, the person in need isn’t a well-known artist or performer. Sometimes it’s just a micro-business owner, without a large network of fans, just trying to get by. Before RESCU, that meant there was little chance of that person getting the same amount of help as the popular performers on the big stages. And as our community grew, so did its needs. It often felt like there was always a hand out for help for someone, somewhere, and it was fairly impossible even with the best intentions, to be equally generous every time.

So, a bunch of folks with a dream and a vision, got together and decided what was needed was a charity organization that could raise funds year-round, and fairly and equitably distribute monies as needed. They also quickly learned that many medical bills are ridiculously inflated and can be negotiated down to a fraction of the original amounts. And, it was determined that by providing educational programs such as First Aid and CPR classes, and networking and organizing with local healthcare providers for low-cost or even gifted services, they could actually help keep the community healthier. So, RESCU was born! The name is an acronym—Renaissance Entertainers Services Crafters United. The mission statement is clear: **The RESCU Foundation is a nonprofit organization established to promote and maintain the health and medical well-being of the participants of Renaissance Faires, historical performances, and other artistic events through financial assistance, advocacy, education, and preventative programs.** The impact is immeasurable. And this year, RESCU is doing its best to function outside the context of faire. Because, this is the year of no faire.

So, what does that look like? How can that even happen? How do we connect our community with healthcare providers when they are scattered around the country, and not gathered together on faire sites? How can we keep money coming in so we can afford to give money away? How do we continue to help our community and honor our mission statement if we can't hold fundraisers? These are the questions that faced RESCU's staff, Board of Directors, and other loyal volunteers in March as we watched shows close like dominoes falling, and four RESCU Rally events--one of them representing nearly a third of our annual budget--cancel in one week, in response to the acknowledgement of global pandemic.

Behind the scenes, RESCU kicked into overdrive! Brainstorming sessions were held. Board members usually on the road set up home offices. New swag was approved and ordered to encourage donations. A better Facebook presence became a high priority and our number of weekly posts was doubled. Twitter and Instagram accounts were established and vitalized. As spring shows continued to announce cancellations and even the summer and fall were unsure, one thing was crystal clear—RESCU had to adapt and innovate in this year of no faire.

Almost immediately upon festivals closing, the RESCU Programs Department came up with a creative alternative to the usual Health Fair events. Instead of gathering participants and inviting local healthcare providers to come offer their services, our Tele-Health Fair concept was created. A date was quickly set, and rather than sitting down with a doctor or nurse practitioner in person, participants enthusiastically embraced visiting over the internet, instead! Our volunteers wore gloves and masks, surfaces were sterilized, and social distancing was observed. Consultations happened privately, by video call; medical advice was still given; prescriptions were still filled. Our community was still served! The concept worked so well that we have reprised it twice more and added live-streamed video instruction in various forms of exercise and yoga and have plans for another in November. Our Programs for health and wellness are at the core of our mission, so we are thrilled and delighted to have found a way to make such events happen even in the year of no faire.

Our Aid Department has continued with absolutely no interruption, to accept aid forms, open cases, assess, advise, advocate, and offer financial assistance to underinsured and uninsured community members in need. Medical bills are even more of a challenge for folks who aren't working. We strongly encourage **any participant, past or present**, who has medical need to reach out to us before it adversely affects your credit score or your health any further. RESCU is available! Our Medical Aid Form is the key for financial assistance, and we can even help you complete it so our hard-working Aid Panel can get right to work and make an objective decision. Download it from [www.RESCUfoundation.org](http://www.RESCUfoundation.org). RESCU is here for you.

So, Programs have adapted to the new world, and Aid Intake is carrying on like normal ... but, where is the money coming from? As you would expect, Fundraising is the biggest challenge RESCU is facing. If you've been wondering how you can help—please keep reading!

Our Fundraising Department has been working quite literally non-stop to innovate and find new ways to bring in donations in this bizarre time of quarantine and distance. And great ideas are always welcome.

Our long history of holding amazing RESCU Rally events, where hundreds of people gather and have fun at an auction event to raise thousands of dollars over the course of an evening, is certainly on “pause.” We don’t get to throw that party in California this year. In fact, in a difficult decision, our Board of Directors has mandated that in the interest of safety, even if a festival does open this year, in-person rallies and events will not happen until 2021. But that certainly doesn’t mean nothing is happening!

The familiar and beloved RESCU Rally events have moved online! It’s not without challenges for sure, but RESCU has partnered with Digital RenFaire and have presented two Digital Rally events already this summer. Online live auctions packed with lots of fabulous items with fast-paced active bidding right there on your computer screen! Clips of one-of-a-kind entertainment by festival favorites round out the event and make it fun for everyone. The next Digital RESCU Rally will be happening soon, so watch our Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram page for news about that. #WeAreRESCU

Our selection of items available in exchange for your donation has grown to include t-shirts in addition to pins, patches, and CDs. In fact, the first batch of shirts is nearly sold out. If you happen to have mad graphic art skills and creative ideas, please contact us!

Another brand-new concept for RESCU is our Friday Five! Every Friday, five fresh new items are revealed on our Facebook page for silent auction bidding. The auctions last all through the weekend, so you have plenty of time to get all your friends in on the fun! The more we all share the event with our groups of friends, and the more people see the beautiful items available, the more successful the fundraising! It’s fun and it’s all for a great cause!

RESCU is also helping to enable folks who want to do their own fundraising events for the benefit of RESCU--affectionately known as FBOs. Whether it’s a podcast or a garage sale, or you’re selling lemonade on the corner, we can provide you with a packet of helpful signage and instructions to be sure your event has the best chance of raising funds to help RESCU help our community.

These exciting new fundraising methods are helping, but if you know of any possible corporate sponsors or grant funding, RESCU would be greatly appreciative!

RESCU is focused on the future and we all know that this year of no faire cannot last forever! We are always looking for volunteers with energy and ideas that can help us live up to our Vision Statement: **“Connecting Our Community with the Power of Health!”**

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