If this was a typical summer, there would be concerts buzzing on the south lawn of the Old State Capitol, serenading tourists and locals.

The many levels of the Hoogland Center for the Arts would have performers flitting about, and the Levitt AMP Music Festival would have returned to the Y Block, giving Springfield concert goers weeks to enjoy a wide range of performances.

Of course, none of this is happening. With COVID-19 shutting down public gatherings, the arts community has felt its impact particularly hard these last few months.

Like other COVID-19 Response Funds that were established in communities across the nation, the one established at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln in partnership with the United Way of Central Illinois focused on supporting frontline workers and basic needs that included food, emergency supplies, utility and financial assistance, and support for children and vulnerable populations.

But the Community Foundation remained keenly aware of the broad impact of COVID-19, and when there was a chance to further help our nonprofit partners in the arts, the call was sent out.

“Arts organizations are being acutely affected by this pandemic,” Community Foundation President and CEO John Stremsterfer said. “In the not-for-profit sector, arts organizations are often the first to be cut from government budgets or might not be in public funding to begin with. So if you’re an organization that relies on performances for your income, it’s that much harder to operate.”

Thanks to generous local donors, such as the Hanson Family Fund, the H.D. Smith Foundation and more, $40,000 was raised for area arts organizations’ general operations through the Arts for Illinois Response Fund. And through a match opportunity with Arts Alliance Illinois, an additional $20,000 in grants will be made to local arts organizations. The six organizations selected as recipients by the Arts for Illinois Relief Fund are the Hoogland Center for the Arts, Springfield Area Arts Council, Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Springfield Art Association of Edwards Place, Springfield Ballet Company, and The Pharmacy Gallery & Art Space, Inc.

While performances and plays bring enjoyment and relief from the day-to-day life, this is also an economic and employment issue. The Arts for Illinois Relief Fund at the Community Foundation is
looking to keep livelihoods intact and infrastructure in place as our community continues to weather this period in time.

A statewide survey by Arts Alliance Illinois assessed the potential financial impact of COVID-related closures on the creative sector through the end of April 2020 and found the statewide impact included 24,228 individual events or performances, 3,581 full-time jobs, 13,235 part-time/contract jobs, and nearly 2.5 million audience members or participants.

Like everyone else, the arts community has been hard at work reframing how to fulfill its mission. Interim Executive Director of the Springfield Area Arts Council (SAAC) Sheila Walk has partnered with Café Moxo to bring twice-weekly performances to Adams Street. The SAAC is still running its re-granting program, Community Arts Access, to further increase the community's access to the arts. Creative ways to showcase talent is still happening through virtual events, but help is needed for the general operations of these organizations.

“We’ve been busy raising money, because all five of our summer concert series were funded by sponsors or grants,” Walk said. “For every grant or sponsorship lost, that’s money that never comes to the Arts Council to help with administrative costs. And that’s why the Arts for Illinois Relief Fund is so important.”

While the match with Arts Alliance Illinois has been fulfilled, area arts organizations still need help. The Community Foundation encourages those who are able to support the general operations of their favorite arts organizations.

For more information about the Community Foundation, visit www.CFLL.org, call 217/789-4431 or email info@CFLL.org.