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COVID-19 Community Foundations in Action

Germany - a virus does not stop our engagement



Marianne and Wilfried Holze

The Coronavirus pandemic went straight to the heart of the Community Foundation of Neubrandenburg in the northeastern part of Germany. The most popular project fell a victim to the containment measures. “The citizens picnic started three years ago with 96 participants. Last year there were already 500 participants. And this year, one thousand people announced their attendance,” reports Wilfried Holze proudly. For a long time, the board tried to stall the final cancellation of the event, hopeful, but in the end constrained by the measures to avoid the assemblage of people. Defiantly, Marianne Holze, adds: “The rest of the projects we kept going and financial support was provided very quickly.”

The 70-year-old together with her husband started the Community Foundation of Neubrandenburg. The foundation came to her mind when she'd just retired: “Just sitting and reading - that's not for me”, Marianne Holze recalls. She became hooked by the idea of starting a community foundation in her city. But there was still someone to convince: Her husband had just sold his company and was looking forward to a nice and calm life in retirement: “I just wanted to do nothing”, he recalls. But his wife's enthusiasm was contagious. Today, the couple spends 30-40 percent of their time in voluntary work for the foundation. And some virus is not going change that. Even though the containment measures mean more work: meetings and engagement of donors went from personal to virtual from one day to the next.

The project ‘Graffiti in MV’ (MV means Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the federal state where the city of Neubrandenburg is located) suffered first from the consequences of the pandemic: public electric control boxes should have been painted by hobby artists: “The city is about to become totally colourful, it will be a great surprise”, says Marianne Holze happily. But the lavish planning had to be switched to mail, messenger and telephone, was slowed down, delayed. Finally, by the end of May, a personal meeting of volunteers was possible, to discuss motives and dates. Now, Marianne Holze is certain: “We will start on

June 20th - regardless of Coronavirus.”

Also with other projects, Community Foundation Neubrandenburg was not willing to give in to the pandemic. The foundation had already confirmed its support of a youth project called ‘The Walk of Sports’, where popular athletes, world and Olympic champions, and of the city shall be honoured similar to the celebrities at the ‘Walk of Fame’. The foundation was planning to finance the first badge. Mr and Mrs Holze are proud: “We found donors for this project via telephone and within a short period of time we even exceeded our funding goal.” Just the public ceremony for the awarding of the first badge has to be postponed to autumn.



*We love Neubrandenburg
by graffiti hobby artist Felix*

Of course, due to Coronavirus, new needs have emerged in the community of Neubrandenburg, too. The foundation could offer support quickly: “We bought tablets for young musicians to practice from home”, recalls Wilfried Holze, “And the Youth Academy of Arts received special fabric to sew masks for elderly homes - we provided the material in less than a week.” Also the local artists got much needed help: “They are planning an ‘Arts Mile’ where 14 of the city’s creatives present their work outside on 3x4 m canvases”, Marianne Holze explains, “This is unique for the community!” The Foundation is supporting these plans with a partial financing.



The [Community Foundation Neubrandenburg](https://www.buergerstiftung-neubrandenburg.de/) started in 2017 with an endowment of €107,000. Meanwhile 15 additional donors helped to raise the endowment to €127.501. The foundation is run by volunteers, 35 at the moment.

CF Neubrandenburg is one of 410 community foundations in Germany. Alliance of Community Foundations in Germany and Foundation for Active Citizenship both help serving the field. For more information follow [on our website](https://www.buergerstiftung-neubrandenburg.de/).