

# Case Study: Junior Art & Music (JAM)

## About Junior Art & Music (JAM)

Junior Art & Music (JAM) was founded in 2010 by award winning kindierocker and art educator, Dre Towey. The Studio is the marriage of her three loves: Art & Children & Music. Since its founding, thousands of children have benefited from the hands-on, process-oriented art and music which is JAM's signature. Whether painting, singing, splatting, spinning, strumming or drumming, children discover that there is no limit to their creativity when their creativity is not limited. When JAM re-opened in 2017 as a 501c3 nonprofit, it did so with the mission to provide a creative haven where artists, musicians, young and old, can hone and share their craft with the community. JAM partners with local organizations to provide art and music enrichment for underserved communities in the greater Norwalk, CT area - primarily inner city youth and individuals with special needs.

## The Challenge: Limited Capacity

As an almost exclusively volunteer-run organization, JAM lacked the business and nonprofit acumen to best serve the community and increase its impact. Established as a heart-and-soul-driven program, JAM needed assistance in organizing financial tracking, operational systems, Board management, donor engagement, compliance, communications, resource allocation, scheduling, data collection and reporting.

## The Solution: Divide and Conquer

JAM's Founder and Creative Director recognized the need to delegate much of the operational, administrative and business management responsibilities and engaged me to act in the capacity of COO and Director of Development.

I began by auditing all processes, systems and financials that were in place and, with my extensive nonprofit management experience, advised on where to allocate the organization's limited resources moving forward. I initially focused on the following:

- Creating the organization's first ever annual operating budget and reconciliation process
- Establishing an annual development plan

- Creating various tracking and reporting tools including for those for grants, individual and corporate donors, and program data
- Created both visual and narrative marketing materials to better tell JAM's story and appeal to discerning donors
- Created Board expectations and formalized a Board Engagement Strategy
- Developed bi-annual program and communications plan
- Refreshed external communications through e-newsletters and strategic use of social media
- Provided planning, logistics and sponsor engagement support for JAM's annual fundraiser
- Created a digital filing system for all materials related to the organization
- Created a donor management database to track communications, donations and engagement
- Created a donation receipt process to meet nonprofit compliance requirements
- Provided strategic counsel for resource allocation to support both public and private programs
- And more...

### The Results: Significant Growth!

Through thoughtful planning, detailed organization and strategic follow through, I helped JAM experience tremendous growth from its inaugural nonprofit year (2017/2018) to its second year (2018/2019). Using our operations budget we reconciled the years' expenses and determined a 34% increase in revenue over our projections. Through new tracking and reporting systems, we captured a 39% increase in the number of programs and events that JAM hosted and a nearly 78% increase in the number of program participants. In just one year! I developed a proficiency in Photoshop to display all of JAM's success in its first ever Annual Report (available to view [here](#)).

With my help, JAM was awarded a Regional Initiative Grant Program (REGI) grant with the support of the CT Department of Economics and Community Development, CT Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment of the Arts, amongst other grants and local awards and recognitions.

With my assistance, JAM's annual fundraiser, Porch JAM, raised nearly \$42,000 for the organization - that's more than double what was raised the previous year.

My leadership helped expand and formalized the Board of Directors - establishing expectations, a give-or-get donation criteria, and a communications and engagement strategy. I fostered relationships, engaged Board members in areas of interest, and addressed lack of follow through - recognizing that the success of a nonprofit is due in great part to a committed and engaged Board.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, JAM's Creative Haven was forced to close, but I remain committed to the organization and provide strategic counsel to its Founder as she explores the future of the organization and how to continue providing its unique and creative value to the Community. The greatest assets I provide to JAM and its founder are my business and organizational experience, which compliment her creative focus. Together, we gained clarity, prioritized and grew the organization to new heights.

### **About Bridget Mariner Consulting**

I combine a background in administration, operations, community building and strategic planning to help entrepreneurs, small businesses and nonprofits amplify their impact for good. I've worked for some amazing brands, people and change-makers, and love to see ideas become reality through careful planning and organized, thoughtful execution. By analyzing the challenge, and the resources and systems in place, I am able to create a sustainable, strategic path to operating more productively and efficiently, and achieving your goals and objectives with greater ease. Personally, I chase two boys (ages 5 and 1.5), bake bread, dig in the dirt and dream about streamlined processes and social and environmental impact.