

11 Emerging Artists Turn Personal Stories Into Songs That Give Back

Play It Forward's 2026 Emerging Artist Spotlight connects original music with fundraisers supporting causes chosen by the artists

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[Play It Forward](#) has announced the 11 winners of its [2026 Emerging Artist Spotlight](#), a program that helps independent musicians share their original music while raising funds for nonprofit organizations they personally selected.

Behind each song is a story shaped by an experience, person or cause that has touched the artist's life, family or community. A childhood wish that changed a life. A family devastated by gun violence. A desire to help people confronting cancer. A commitment to strengthening communities and creating better opportunities for others.

"These artists are sharing much more than their music," said Steve Mazza, Founder of Play It Forward. "They are sharing the experiences that shaped them and using those experiences to help someone else. We hope listeners discover an artist they love, connect with a cause and become part of that story."

Rather than simply asking fans to stream a song, the Spotlight invites them to become part of what the song represents. Visitors can explore all 11 artist stories and fundraisers on the Play It Forward homepage, then donate to download an original track. One hundred percent of each donation supports the artist's chosen charity.

The Emerging Artist Spotlight was created to help talented independent musicians reach new listeners while giving them a platform to support causes that matter to them. Each selected artist receives a featured artist page and fundraiser, along with promotional support from Play It



(left to right) Marirose Rueth, Jake Cassman, Samaera, Syante, Page Montgomery, Bray Smizzi, Lorelei, Jae Cabrera, Gruve Collective, Daniel Saighe, Caliban Strange

Forward.

While the artists come from various backgrounds and musical styles, their fundraisers share a common purpose. Some are honoring loved ones. Some are supporting organizations that once supported them. Others are responding to challenges they have seen in their own communities.

The 2026 Emerging Artist Spotlight winners and their chosen causes are:

- Marirose Rueth: Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois
- Jake Cassman: Jail Guitar Doors
- Samaera: NAMI
- Syante: Jubilee Oikos
- Page Montgomery: Take Back The Night Foundation
- Bray Smizzi: Everytown for Gun Safety
- Lorelei: Cool Earth
- Jae Cabrera: Spread The Cheer USA
- Gruve Collective: Diabetes Research Institute Foundation
- Daniel Saighe aka Unstoppable: American Cancer Society
- Caliban Strange: United Way Worldwide

Their stories show how a song can become more than a creative expression. It can become a tribute, a thank-you, a call for change or a source of hope.

All 11 artists and fundraisers are featured on the Play It Forward homepage.

Visitors can listen to the music, learn why each cause was chosen and support a fundraiser by downloading an original song with a donation.

About Play It Forward

Play It Forward is a nonprofit music platform that helps artists raise money for causes they care about through original music. Artists share their songs, fans donate to download them, and 100 percent of donations benefit the participating charities.

[Graphics and video](#) that can be used for articles:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DvSDyyM5eo4l0olv3Y3uUXruVxjbO_lb?usp=sharing

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