Lending special meaning to Buffalo Boogie’s 25th anniversary on May 13 was a fundraising live auction of a commemorative quilt, which showcased T-shirts from every race since the race’s inception.

The auction for the Buffalo Boogie 25th anniversary quilt raised $2,500 to help care for the Nature Center’s bison herd. Rita Short Photo.
This one-of-a-kind piece was designed and created by two longtime Nature Center devotees. “When I mentioned the idea of designing a quilt to commemorate the 25th anniversary to my friend Lisa Gromelski, she was ecstatic about volunteering her talent,” said Anne Hamman, customer service advisor at the Nature Center and co-quilter. “Lisa loves to tell a story through her love of needle and thread, and the chance to weave the Buffalo Boogie story into a one-of-a-kind piece was a true labor of love and very meaningful.”

On race day, Lisa commented that she enjoyed making the quilt with Anne and even had suggestions for creating additional pieces for future fundraisers.

Though quilts were historically used as bedcovers, today, they have become what some describe as non-utilitarian works of art, offering a unique kind of visual storytelling. “Anyone who quilts, knows someone who is a quilter, or has ever been given a quilt as a gift appreciates that each piece of scrap or material tells a story of its own,” Anne said. “When the pieces are cut and stitched together, it’s as if the memory of an event comes to new life.”

When they heard about the quilt, Friends Executive Director Laura Wood and others on the Buffalo Boogie planning committee developed the auction idea, and the Friends Board Communications Committee promoted the event. Bidding took off fast and furiously, culminating in a race-day final bid of $2,500, submitted by Bill and BJ Collins.

“We did not know what to expect or how much would be raised,” Laura said. “The fact that the quilt went to these two made the event all the more special because they have been volunteers and dedicated Nature Center supporters for decades.”

BJ Collins certainly understands the special nature of this year’s anniversary. She organized the first event in 1993 and donated several early racing T-shirts for the quilt.
For years, funds raised from Buffalo Boogie have helped care for the bison herd. Many often ask where the race name, which has withstood the test of time, originated. "My sister-in-law, Claire, ran a company called Boogie Bears, and I thought 'boogie' was a cool word because it implied fun and dancing, not work," BJ said. "Producing the race that benefits such a wonderful place like the Nature Center and its creatures and that continues 25 years later is truly a life accomplishment."

Building on legacies like these lend inspiration and motivation to current staff, volunteers, Friends members, and board members. As Anne mentioned, they're truly labors of love. Those who donated T-shirts, created the quilt, offered administrative support, bid, and shelled out money did so because they love this wonderful place. Such selflessness earns our deepest gratitude and motivates us all to continue giving back.