

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 9/9/18

Contact Information

Organization Name: Hope Springs Equestrian Therapy, Inc. Executive Director: Jeannie Knowlton
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 Phone: 610-827-0931 Board of Directors Chair: Sandra Hansen
 Website: www.hope-springs.org Primary Contact Name: Jeannie Knowlton
 Year Incorporated: 1997 Primary Contact E-mail: director@hope-springs.org

Has your nonprofit ever applied to the Community Foundation? Yes No__ Not Sure__
 Has your nonprofit ever received funding from the Community Foundation? Yes No__ Not Sure__
 Donor Advised Fund(s) ___ Fund for Chester County ___ Don't know/Not sure

Field/s of Interest:

___ Arts, Culture & Humanities ___ Environment/Animal Welfare ___ Education
 Health Human Services ___ Religion

Organization Information:

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

Most clients live in Chester County; the rest in Montgomery, Delaware, or Philadelphia counties.

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served: Hope Springs delivers equestrian therapy to adults, children and youth at risk with diverse disabilities. In 2017, we delivered 1503 therapeutic riding lessons and 30 camp days to 68 unique individuals, including 20 riders in financial need. Currently, 69% of our riders are children under the age of 21. 78% have cognitive or behavioral disabilities – predominantly autism, pervasive developmental disorders, or intellectual developmental delays. 49% face physical disabilities, including cerebral palsy, seizures, blindness, and spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries. Approximately 7% of our riders are youth-at-risk, and 7% are siblings.

Mission: Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with cognitive, physical, emotional or behavioral disabilities by providing them with affordable therapeutic riding and associated special education of the highest possible quality in a warm, safe, and familiar environment.

Proposal Summary: We request a grant to support our “Hope Springs for All” programs which serve individuals with disabilities. All too often, individuals with disabilities feel dependent upon their families, doctors, therapists and others. We strive to empower each rider through increased independence, using equine-facilitated therapy to enhance quality of life by stimulating physical and mental growth while engaging in activities that students and their family enjoy. Proven benefits of equestrian therapy include increased strength, endurance, flexibility, coordination, self-confidence and communication skills.

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

___ Mission, Vision & Strategy ___ Governance & Leadership ___ Strategic Relationships
 ___ Fundraising & Development ___ Technology Other: _____

Annual Budget \$ <u>244,562</u>	<u>3</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>75</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>12</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>22</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>60</u>	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>3</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>3,000+</u>	# of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Allerton Foundation, Phoenixville Community Health Foundation, Elsie Lee Garthwaite Memorial Foundation, Whitford Charitable Fund, a fund of the Chester County Community Foundation, Harriet G. Fredericks Foundation

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 2,000

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

1. Organization's history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

History: Hope Springs Equestrian Therapy was founded in 1997 with a focus on delivering health and education services to local children and adults with disabilities. We have added programs over the years in response to the needs of our riders and the community. Starting with one instructor and one horse and growing into a community-recognized organization, Hope Springs has attracted and retained an active, committed board and staff. We now have six instructors, five horses, four ponies, and nearly 60 volunteers.

Goals

- Provide high quality horse-assisted therapy for children, youth and adults who have physical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral disabilities regardless of their ability to pay.
- Provide programs that fill service needs within our community, continually seeking input from our clients and their families from service professionals and organizations.
- Continue outreach to and collaboration with organizations, agencies, schools and others serving this often-marginalized population, ensuring that needs are met and lives are enriched.

Key Achievements

- 21 years operating, successfully offering therapeutic horseback riding services, continually improving, developing and implementing new programs.
- FinishLine Youth Foundation award recognizing our positive impact on teens with disabilities
- Community Fund Grant awarded by the Barra Foundation in recognition of leadership and adaptability.
- Ongoing establishment and maintenance of collaborative relationships with local area school districts, public and private agencies, medical practices, rehab facilities, and others.
- Staff recruitment, retention and training focused on compassion for our riders and knowledge of their needs and abilities.
- Serving as an Education Improvement Tax Credit Education Improvement Organization.
- Ongoing care, feeding and stabling of nine carefully-selected, well-trained equines.
- Relocation of our program to a new indoor riding facility which enables us to deliver lessons more consistently in extreme cold and hot weather and allows for future ridership growth.

Distinctiveness

Hope Springs is a unique therapeutic riding center because:

- Our rider-focused approach uses therapy plans that are customized for each individual, assessing his or her unique needs and working toward individualized goals. The familiar and nurturing environment we provide allows riders to relax and focus on tasks to be accomplished at each lesson, and work toward positive outcomes over the course of weeks or months as they build confidence, strength and skills.
- Every effort is made to involve family members of riders in the therapeutic process. We offer a safe haven for families desiring a sense of normalcy, where they can meet others who are working through similar struggles. Siblings of riders can participate in our program, which strengthens bonds between siblings and gives the family a fun activity to engage in together.
- Our small program size gives riders more one-on-one time with their instructors and volunteers, enhancing the therapeutic experience. This tailored approach gives riders, their families and therapists a better understanding of needs and abilities, helping the team to set and work toward goals together. Our custom approach also allows for rapid development and piloting of new horse-assisted therapies to better address unmet needs within our community.
- "Strides to Success" special education curriculum is now incorporated into our camps. This equine-themed social studies program helps riders develop communication, listening, writing and reading skills, and fosters self-expression through art therapy.

Hope Springs has earned credibility by consistently providing high quality services with proven beneficial outcomes for people who have disabilities. We are trusted by medical, education and mental health professionals, as evidenced by their ongoing referral of clients to our programs. Organizations currently referring to us include Camphill Soltane, The Vanguard School, The ARC of Chester County, the Chester County Department of Mental Health/Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, ReMed, Royer-Greaves School for Blind, Quest Therapeutic Services, and ten local area public school districts.

2. Funding request

- **Description of key initiatives** Our “Hopes Springs for All” programs include:

Traditional Equestrian Therapy

Beneficial for individuals who have a wide range of physical and intellectual disabilities, this program’s straightforward approach involves the rider with a horse or pony, an instructor and one or two volunteers. Weekly lessons are tailored to each rider’s abilities, needs and goals. Benefits include:

- *physical improvements*: increased strength, endurance, balance, flexibility, coordination, muscle tone, posture, dexterity and stamina; and
- *emotional and mental growth*: enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem, concentration and communication skills, and a greater sense of being capable and courageous.

Horse Camps for Children with Disabilities

One week (summer) and single day (weekend and holiday) horse camps give children and youth a deeper experience of horse-assisted therapy. Spending more time with horses, other students and their instructors gives campers more opportunities for learning, socializing and having fun. Camps offer riding and horse care instruction, games, and our EITC “*Strides to Success*” education program.

Sibling Ride Program

Siblings of children with disabilities often experience stress and lack positive attention. Including them in our program boosts confidence for both siblings while promoting deeper understanding of equestrian therapy and how it enriches the whole family.

Therapeutic Driving Program

Extends the benefits of equestrian therapy to students who are unable to ride comfortably or safely due to disability, but who could still benefit from horse-facilitated therapies. Therapeutic driving imparts knowledge of safety, horses, harnessing, and driving skills using teamwork. Taught as a series of skills broken down into “bites” appropriate for each student’s abilities, students progress at a rate that challenges them while facilitating feelings of accomplishment and physical benefits.

- **Specific needs and issues to be addressed**

Individuals who seek our services have diagnoses that can make them feel dependent upon their families, doctors and others. Currently, 69% of our riders are children under the age of 21. 78% have cognitive or behavioral disabilities – predominantly autism, pervasive developmental disorders, or intellectual developmental delays. 49% face physical disabilities, including cerebral palsy, seizures, blindness, and spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries. 7% of our riders are youth-at-risk, and 7% are siblings.

Hope Springs works to empower all of our riders toward increased independence and enhanced quality of life. The natural movement of a horse relaxes and strengthens muscle groups that are affected by illness and injury, which improves balance, coordination and endurance, and in general helps to restore independence to people who have unique physical needs. Equestrian therapy is recognized and respected by medical professional and it is most effective when used in conjunction with physical, occupational and other types of therapy.

The American Hippotherapy Association has conducted research on the multidimensional movements of the horse, proving that they give riders “the opportunity to explore, control and coordinate posture and movement.” Sitting astride a moving horse uses the same muscles required for walking. For someone who cannot walk, riding a horse is a highly therapeutic activity that increases blood flow and improves muscle tone. Equestrian therapy can be highly beneficial for riders who have difficulty communicating verbally. Therapeutic riding also improves riders’ quality of life by giving them positive psychological benefits such

as enjoyment, a sense of accomplishment and a boost in self-esteem. Our riders work hard to achieve their goals and can do so while having fun!

- **Organizational impact if initiative is undertaken** Our current budget is \$244,562. Keeping this therapy accessible to all riders that seek its unique approach and remarkable outcomes is one of Hope Springs' highest priorities. We offer partial and full scholarships to those in financial need, and work to keep expenses as low as possible. Up to half of our annual budget is covered by fees for services, but we must raise funds to meet our remaining costs. Rent and the cost of maintaining our barn, riding arena and trails are essential in our programs. At the center of all programs are the therapy horses that so patiently serve our riders. Foundation funding and individual/corporate contributions, along with assistance from nearly 50 volunteers (most of whom live in Chester County), make it possible for us to meet expenses and provide equestrian therapy to riders and families in need.

- **Activities to implement the initiative. Please include a description of the expected activities; timeline and costs to implement the initiative. If external consulting services are required, include the anticipated costs and expertise of the consultants to be hired.**

In 2018, we intend to deliver at least 1550 weekly equestrian therapy lessons to students with disabilities and 30 days of camp. Our Board of Directors and staff are committed to raising funds to make it possible for deserving individuals to participate in, and benefit from, their therapeutic riding program. To meet the demand for high quality, affordable equine therapy we continue to diligently raise funds and spread the word about our programs to the community, participating in healthcare, special-needs, and equestrian events such as the Handicapped Rider's Event at the Devon Horse Show. We submit grant proposals to local, national and corporate foundations, conduct an annual appeal and fundraising event, and participate in the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit program as an Innovative Education provider.

- **Why it is important to fund this now** Hope Springs Equestrian Therapy remains committed to enhancing quality of life for children, youth and adults with disabilities, regardless of their ability to pay for services. Equine-facilitated therapy is recognized by the medical community as an effective, valuable therapy but it is rarely covered by health insurance. It is important for riders to participate in their therapeutic riding program on a consistent and continuous basis to sustain improvement and avoid plateaus or setbacks. Many riders come from households with tight budgets that are strained by the costs of caring for a family member with disabilities; funding now will allow us to keep lesson fees affordable and offer scholarships to enable riders to continue their individualized therapeutic horseback riding program without disruption. Support from the Chester County Community Foundation will allow us to continue to provide the highest quality horse-assisted therapy for our existing riders and will help us reach out to even more local families to further expand community access to our services.

- 3. How impact and results will be demonstrated** Hope Springs is known for delivering high quality individualized services with beneficial outcomes, encouraging medical, educational and mental health professionals to refer patients, students and clients to us. We seek and maintain collaborations with healthcare experts, who help to ensure that our programs are as beneficial as possible for riders. Each rider's progress is evaluated and recorded, noting observations made by instructors and volunteers, complemented by physician assessments and input and feedback from family members and caregivers.

While each rider's disabilities and personal goals vary, our objective is to demonstrate measurable improvement for each rider, positively impacting their everyday lives. Riders who experience physical improvements from equestrian therapy will likely be able to do more on their own, with less assistance, resulting in greater independence. Riders that experience mental benefits from equestrian therapy will not only enjoy leaving their residences regularly to interact with others and exercise, but may become more confident and capable of tackling other new tasks.