## I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

### GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

**One page only.** This page will be shared electronically with Grant Committee Members & Fund Advisors.  
Note: if Philanthropy Network of Greater Philadelphia’s Common Grant Application is used, the Community Foundation’s **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**  
To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit [www.chesocof.org](http://www.chesocof.org)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field/s of Interest:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Culture &amp; Humanities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Contact Information
- **Organization Name:** Nellie’s Schoolhouse  
  **Address:** 35 Old Covered Bridge Rd.  
  **Phone:** 610-212-0516  
  **Website:** nellieschoolhouse.com  
  **Year Incorporated:** 2015  
  **FEIN:** 47-4468988  
- **Executive Director/CEO Name:** Tom Richards  
  **Executive Director/CEO E-mail:** trichards1157@gmail.com  
- **Board of Directors Chair Name:** Tom Richards  
- **Primary Contact Name:** Tom Richards  
- **Primary Contact E-mail:** trichards1157@gmail.com

### 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

### Organization Information:
- **Geographic Area Served:** Chester County, Montgomery County, Philadelphia County
- **Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:**  
  - Children and young adults with autism, depression and anxiety

**Mission:** Nellie’s Schoolhouse offers and maintains ongoing therapeutic relationships between children and young adults with autism, depression and anxiety

**Proposal Summary:** Nellie’s Schoolhouse’s land and well-mannered and well-trained dogs is seeking $6,5000 for general operating expenses including

**If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:**
- Mission, Vision & Strategy  
- Governance & Leadership  
- Strategic Relationships  
- Fundraising & Development  
- Technology  
- Other: 

### Annual Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Budget</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 % of budget for program expenses</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>1 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 % of budget for administrative expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 # of Board Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 % of budget for fundraising expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 % total</td>
<td></td>
<td>600 # of Volunteer Hours</td>
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</table>

### Top 3-5 funding sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation:</th>
</tr>
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<td>$6,000.00</td>
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Date
Executive Director/CEO Name: Tom Richards
Executive Director/CEO E-mail: trichards@usa.net
Board of Directors Chair Name: Tom Richards
Primary Contact Name: Tom Richards
Primary Contact E-mail: trichards155@gmail.com

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):
Chester County, Montgomery County, Philadelphia County

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:
Children and young adults with autism, depression and anxiety

Mission:
Nellie’s Schoolhouse offers and maintains ongoing therapeutic relationships between children and young adults with autism, depression and anxiety

Proposal Summary:
Nellie’s Schoolhouse is seeking $6,000 for general operating expenses including food, training, creating & improving curriculum, and maintaining our mission.

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:
___Mission, Vision & Strategy ___Governance & Leadership ___Strategic Relationships
___Fundraising & Development ___Technology ___Other:

Annual Budget $45,000
___30 % of budget for program expenses ___7 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
___50 % of budget for administrative expenses ___9 # of Board Volunteers
___20 % of budget for fundraising expenses ___600 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: $6,000.00

2-2019
History, Goals, and Key Achievements

The mission of Nellie’s Schoolhouse is to create and maintain ongoing therapeutic relationships between children and young adults with autism and life challenges and well-mannered and well-trained dogs. During sessions with our volunteers and dogs, children learn how to approach, pet, groom, feed, and walk our dogs as well as give commands over a prescribed period of time. Ours is not a “one and done” program but a commitment to teaching children appropriately and patiently - using repetition, positive reinforcement, and differentiated instruction to achieve our goals. Through the learning and acquisition of these skills, self-confidence and independence are strengthened, and socialization and communication skills improve.

Having celebrated our third anniversary as an organization in November 2018, we have serviced 13 elementary, middle, and special needs programs. Our effectiveness is reflected in a study conducted by the TALK Institute and School of 8 students with autism over a span of 10 months, in which the majority showed marked improvement in the ability to independently pet, brush, feed, and walk our dogs. We performed an additional study in 2018 at Uwchlan Hills Elementary School, which also demonstrated the effectiveness of our program. In 2018, we partnered with Carousel Connections to launch our vocational training program, Dog Walking 101. We have since taught two additional courses at Common Space Ardmore and Hilltop Preparatory School. Through a curriculum that includes verbal instruction and role playing, our participants, young people on the spectrum, learn the skills necessary to become reliable and adept dog walkers, dog sitters, and shelter workers. We have made measurable differences in the lives of children and young adults from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, developmental, and geographic backgrounds.

Our aims are the following:

- Continue to promote and grow Dog Walking 101 so that we are able to offer courses concurrently in different areas.
- Evaluate and refine our curriculum and implement any changes where necessary.
- Dedicate resources to continually and consistently train our volunteers in terms of special and high-needs education, as well as provide training to their dogs.
- Continue to spread the mission of Nellie’s Schoolhouse into the greater Philadelphia region, with emphasis on reaching children in high-needs urban areas.
- Continue to effect positive change in children with special needs.

Nellie’s Schoolhouse respectfully requests $6,000 from the Chester County Community Foundation to support its general operating expenses. Funding will support Dog Walking 101, volunteer training, curriculum development, and publicity.
The bond between a child and a dog is immeasurable. We find that our participants feel accepted around our dogs because they live in the present and are free of any judgements. The children and young adults learn joyfully in a space and environment of mutual love and respect.

Distinctiveness

One of the aspects that makes Nellie’s Schoolhouse unique is that we break from the traditional “therapy dog” model. Whereas typical therapy dog organizations provide value by aiming to make their participants “feel good” for an allotted amount of time, at the heart of our mission is education. With the guidance and instruction of our executive director or a volunteer, young people in a group setting are each provided with the chance to interact with our dogs one-on-one.

The first phase of our sessions involves each participant approaching the dog and asking the dog’s owner, “May I pet your dog?” This is followed by, “Where may I pet your dog?” These questions are integral to the Nellie’s Schoolhouse curriculum, as they not only help those participants with autism with their ability to communicate effectively but also reinforce to all our participants the importance of situational judgement, so if they encounter a dog on the street, they know to ask the owner before petting the dog to determine whether he or she is friendly.

Sessions continue with our participants brushing, feeding and, ultimately, walking the dogs. Our program, however, is not as much about which tasks are completed as it is about how they are completed, framed by individuals’ overall progress. For instance, we have had children so terrified of dogs that they hid under a table during the first session. For them, a step forward was noted when they were able to stand within five feet of the dog at a later session, followed by the ability to touch the dog with one finger, etc. Additionally, we work with young people with autism who are both verbal and nonverbal. While it may be realistic for those who are verbal to be able to pet, brush, feed, and walk a dog within a few sessions, for those who are nonverbal, successes are measured by a different set of metrics consisting of awareness of boundaries and comfort level.

The effectiveness of Nellie’s Schoolhouse is exemplified by the progress made by one of our participants, Danny. Before our involvement, Danny, who is autistic and nonverbal, was so fearful of dogs to the point where he would not go outside if a neighborhood dog was in the area. After working with us for several months, Danny grew to be able to confidently pet, groom, feed, and walk a dog. Presently, Danny actually ventures into the neighborhood and seeks out dogs to pet, as well as frequents his neighbors’ house to visit with their dog. Nellie’s Schoolhouse focuses on progress as determined by each child’s individual circumstances and celebrates successes accordingly.

Funding Request

Every day, the parents and teachers of children with autism face the challenge of helping them prosper. Prevalence of autism in the United States increased by 6-15 percent each year from 2002 to 2010, and currently it is estimated that 1 in 68 will be born with an autism spectrum disorder. The need is growing. Each individual on the spectrum requires an Individualized
Education Program, and the Nellie’s Schoolhouse curriculum has shown to be an effective and adaptable “tool in the toolkit” that can be instrumental to each child’s ability to thrive.

Compared to young adults with other disabilities, those on the spectrum especially struggle with finding work. According to a 2012 study, more than one-third of young adults with an autism spectrum disorder have not had a job or received postgraduate education after leaving high school. We have bridged this gap with our Dog Walking 101 vocational program. Two separate courses at Common Space Ardmore (one six-week session and one eight-week session) occurred during the spring and summer of 2018, and we just finished an eight-week class at Hilltop Preparatory School in Rosemont. Several of our graduates are now professional dog walkers in the Philadelphia area. These classes have been taught by the executive director of Nellie’s Schoolhouse and a certified dog trainer.

A contribution from the Chester County Community Foundation will allow Dog Walking 101 to be taught in multiple locations simultaneously, so that we can cater to families in a larger demographic. The expenses of the program include renting classroom space, creating written and visual components for classroom instruction, paying a certified dog trainer, and creating marketing and publicity materials.

In addition to benefiting young people with autism, the Nellie’s Schoolhouse curriculum has had a positive impact on those facing other life challenges. According to the latest data released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2016, of the 1.5 million people living in Philadelphia, 25.7% live below the poverty line. Philadelphia is the poorest large city in the United States. Nellie’s Schoolhouse has endured lasting partnerships with Pan American Academy Charter School and St. James School, both located in North Philadelphia. Classmates in groups of 5-10 come together in a collaborative environment of support and encouragement as each student learns to pet, groom, feed, and walk the dogs at his or her own pace. As one administrator observed, “Many of our students have anxiety, and the ability to approach the dogs at their own pace over time has been tremendous for their self-confidence.” We believe Philadelphia is especially fertile for Nellie’s Schoolhouse expansion, as we provide an activity that is both educational and dynamic, which allows the students to interact with each other and instills a sense of accomplishment.

We are also in need of funding to properly and effectively train our volunteers and dogs. Currently, four of our dogs now registered as certified therapy dogs, from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, our goal is to ensure all our dogs are certified by the end of 2019. This will require that our dogs, with their owners, attend classes and successfully complete tests.

In order to continue to spread the mission of Nellie’s Schoolhouse, it is critical that we have the financial capacity to create engaging and informative marketing materials, which so far have included promotional videos, brochures, and posters. We need to be able to maintain the quality of our website and highlight our work on Facebook and Instagram.

Nellie’s Schoolhouse is poised to increase its outreach and is primed for a bright future ahead. We graciously ask the Chester County Community Foundation to support Nellie’s Schoolhouse and its excellent work in the greater Philadelphia area.