

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.chescocf.org

Date: 9/13/19

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT Players, LLC
Address: c/o Barbara Miriello
215 Highland View Dr.
Lincoln University, PA 19352
Phone: 484-459-5342
Website: www.actplayers.org
Year Incorporated: Became LLC in 2017
FEIN: 27-1674251

Executive Director/CEO Name: n/a
Executive Director/CEO E-mail: n/a
Board of Directors Chair Name: Karen Weaver
Primary Contact Name: Barbara Miriello
Primary Contact E-mail: barbaram@zoominternet.net

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):

Primarily Southern Chester County, but patrons and volunteers have come from other areas of Chester County, Lancaster County, Delaware County, and Philadelphia County, as well as neighboring states of Delaware and Maryland.

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served: We serve theater attendees of all ages. We serve actors and stage production volunteers from age 6 and up. In 2018 we had approximately 360 volunteers and approximately 1780 theater attendees. In 2018 we had 18 children attend the Musical Theater Camp and 12 volunteers leading/assisting them. The number of campers has averaged approximately 25 campers per year. We provide scholarships to families who need financial assistance for camp (typically one scholarship per year).

Mission: ACT Players, LLC is dedicated to promoting an appreciation for the arts, strengthening the community, and enriching the cultural lives of the residents of Southern Chester County by presenting affordable, quality theatrical entertainment.

Proposal Summary: The ACT Players Board realizes that we need to build our capacity to fundraise for the organization. We wish to conduct our first annual appeal and we also understand the necessity of launching a capital campaign in order to fund a performance/education venue of our own. The Board would like to enlist the support of a consultant to assist us in building our fundraising capacity by aiding us in determining the best option for our performance venue-- sharing space, leasing, purchasing, or building. They would also support us in researching options available to our organization and determining the Board's readiness for fundraising activity and potential for success, as well as developing a plan for a successful capital campaign.

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

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

Annual Budget \$ \$42,700 ___ 0 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
___ 85 % of budget for program expenses ___ 15 # of Board Volunteers
___ 14 % of budget for administrative expenses ___ 345 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
___ 1 % of budget for fundraising expenses ___ 6,000 + # of Volunteer Hours
100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Ticket Sales, Donations, Camp Tuition, Fundraisers

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$3,000

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

HISTORY

ACT Players, LLC--formerly Avon Grove Recreation Association Community Theater, then Avon Grove Community Theater (ACT)—was conceived in the winter of 2004 when co-founder, Mala Marcano, had a vision for a family oriented community theater that would allow the thespians of Southern Chester County to perform close to home and avoid many hours of traveling to the neighboring states and cities to participate in various productions. She rallied family, friends and neighbors (who were also traveling to perform) to create their own theater group in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. With a wealth of talent in the area, they were confident a community theater would not only be successful but also bring a much-needed cultural benefit to the area. The founding members had experience with either directing or performing. They consulted a community theater how-to book, followed it step-by-step, and most importantly took the book's advice to "just go for it." After securing funding from the Avon Grove Recreation Association, ACT produced its first show, "Bye Bye Birdie," in July of 2004 at the Avon Grove High School *Hugh C. Morgan* auditorium.

ACT formed a Board of Directors and strategized for continued growth including forming an independent entity and, ultimately, making Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania ACT's home. In 2009, ACT made the decision to end the partnership with AGRA, and in 2010 ACT realized their goal of a three-production season--Winter Variety Show, Summer Musical, and a two-week, full-day musical theater camp for children.

ACT's family and reach began to grow to include participants (ACTors) from the neighboring states of Maryland and Delaware. Over its 15-year history, ACT has involved over 3,000 volunteers--musicians, actors, directors, costumers, set builders, lighting and sound technicians, and front of the house staff. Multiple ACT participants have moved on to pursue careers in film and stage production in California and New York.

By 2011 the ACT Board of Directors realized that a strategic plan was necessary to prioritize finding a permanent theater home. With facilitation from ACT Board member, Dr. John Carr, ACT reviewed its mission, purpose and goals and developed a five-year growth plan. ACT moved forward with the plan, and formed committees to focus on planning for a theater, applying for grants, fundraising, and production of our shows. While progress was made in many areas, and ACT's shows continued to be high-quality and attract participants and attendees, the Board found it difficult to juggle production of the shows and the work of finding a permanent home.

In 2017, under the leadership of ACT Players' President, Karen Weaver, the ACT Players' Board held its first annual retreat to focus on mission, goals, and strategy. Additionally, in 2017, ACT formed a limited liability company and officially changed its name to ACT Players, LLC. Karen Weaver made contact with Karen Simmons at CCCF, and six ACT board members attended the Institute for Board Trustees, sponsored by CCCF in November of 2017. In 2018 CCCF put the ACT board in contact with leaders from Uptown Theater in West Chester as well as Beth Briglia and Constance Carter, and ACT leaders were re-energized in the effort to find a space to lease for a theater, find a group to share theater space with, or build ACT's own theater.

MISSION AND GOALS

Mission Statement: ACT Players, LLC is dedicated to promoting an appreciation for the arts, strengthening the community, and enriching the cultural lives of the residents of Southern Chester County and its surrounding communities by presenting affordable, quality theatrical entertainment.

Established in 2004, ACT Players is home to a diverse group of individuals who share a common passion for the “performing arts”, both on the stage and in the wings. We are not simply actors, but directors, pit musicians, producers, costumers, choreographers, light and sound technicians, and most importantly, we are volunteers who support an organization built on core family values, inclusiveness, pride, fellowship, talent, mutual respect, and love for the theater. Towards that end, ACT Players endeavors to:

- Provide challenging workshops and drama courses to interested students and adults as an enrichment and extension of the community theater program.
- Create quality, educational and cultural experiences for anyone wishing to participate in any area of the theater/performing arts.
- Give young people an appreciation of the performing arts, imparting to them the necessary skills for producing, directing and participating in community theater and other related projects
- Continue to seek opportunity for future growth within our community and to partner effectively with other dramatic organizations.
- Build a true sense of community strength and spirit by utilizing the existing talents of local thespians and providing a creative outlet for aspiring performers.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Core Productions

Since its beginning in 2004, ACT has produced an annual summer musical. In addition, ACT has produced eight traveling Murder Mystery fundraisers and performed them for multiple organizations. Annual Winter Variety Shows were produced from 2005 until 2016. In 2016 ACT Players expanded their season to include a musical revue, “Broadway Moments” and, in 2017, added a non-musical play, “Twelve Angry Jurors” in addition to the summer musical production. In 2018, ACT further expanded their season to include a fall musical production. ACT Players is run solely by volunteers. From 2004 to the present time, it is estimated that we have involved more than 3,000 volunteers in our productions and have provided quality entertainment to more than 20,000 theater patrons.

Summer Drama/Musical Theater Camp

The concept for the musical theater camp includes auditions on the first day of camp, experience with how a show is brought to the stage through the two weeks and culminates in a full-length children’s show at the end of the ten-day camp. Campers experience all aspects of theater; acting, stage work, character development, set building, costuming, prop making, make-up, singing and dancing. ACT has produced a summer drama camp for 13 years and estimates we have reached approximately 350 children and involved 175 volunteers in this initiative. Beginning in 2015, we have provided scholarships to families who were not able to afford the cost of the camp (typically 1 scholarship per year). Many of our campers attend our camp for multiple years, and then become volunteer leaders in the camp and participants in our core productions.

DISTINCTIVENESS

ACT Players consistently produces quality entertainment and programs, using only volunteers and is funded by ticket sales, donations, and camp tuition. The organization is financially secure and has no debt. This is due to Board leadership, wise decisions on projects, and thoughtful stewardship of ACT’s funds.

ACT Players’ volunteers repeatedly comment on the welcoming family atmosphere they find when volunteering for our organization and the dedication of all who are involved to produce a quality show. ACT makes an impact by providing an outlet for community members to express their love of theater in multiple ways and gives them a loving and nurturing environment in which to be creative. Many volunteers come back year after year to be part of our outstanding productions because of their positive experience.

Our patrons comment on the quality of our productions and many come to see every show we produce. Testimonials from patrons, volunteers, and camp parents are included for your review.

2. FUNDING REQUEST

- **Description of key initiatives**--The ACT Players Board realizes that professional guidance is needed to help develop our fundraising capacity. We plan to launch our first annual appeal by the end of 2019. This activity will help the board gain fundraising momentum and also identify key donors as we prepare for a capital campaign to help us achieve the goal of having our own theater and education space. We are requesting funding of \$3,000 to hire a consultant to assist the Board with fundraising capacity building. Specifically, the consultant will work with the Board to determine the best solution for our permanent home (space sharing, leasing, building, buying) and assist us with the necessary work of researching options and assessing the community support for this initiative.
- **Specific needs and issues to be addressed**--Throughout ACT's 15-year history, venue space for productions has varied from school auditoriums, church social halls, various multi-purpose rooms, retirement centers and senior living communities, Ware Performing Arts Center on the campus of Lincoln University, and a neighboring black box theater. Moving our shows to various venues has presented multiple challenges for the organization such as the varying size of the stage and audience capacity, sharing the space with other groups, not having access that we were promised, storing our sets, props, and costumes off-site and having to transport them to and from the show venue, and, most importantly, making it difficult for our volunteers and patrons to find, participate in, and attend ACT productions. Over the past two years the Board has been presented with various directions they could take to have a dedicated theater/education space. These options include sharing space with another entertainment group, leasing space, partnering with a non-theater organization to share space, and building a space of our own.
- **Why it is important to fund this now**--The ACT board realizes that if this organization is to continue to grow, we need our own theater/education space and have prioritized taking the steps needed to achieve this goal.
- **How impact and results will be demonstrated**--Working with a consultant will impact ACT Players by educating the ACT Board in the actions necessary to raise funds to achieve the goal of having a theater/education space as well as give the Board tangible steps to take to achieve that goal. Results of this work will be a clear vision by the Board of the type of facility we wish to buy, lease, or build. The board will be equipped and educated to successfully run a capital campaign.

For capacity building grant proposals:

- *How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?*
Working with a consultant will positively impact our nonprofit by building the board's ability to fundraise by helping us learn the steps and skills necessary to cultivate donors and ask for a gift when the time is appropriate.
- *How will this impact be measured?*
With board training and guidance from an experienced fundraising consultant, the board will be able to launch a successful capital campaign and raise funds for a theater/education space that will enhance our programs by eliminating the challenge of searching for a venue for our productions. The new space will enable us to expand our programs and reach more volunteers and patrons.
- *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. Include external consultant proposals if applicable.*
A proposal from James D. Kelly is attached for your consideration. Mr. Kelly has had a long and successful career with the YMCA and has extensive experience working with Boards of Directors and in planning, fundraising and building facilities for the YMCA. Mr. Kelly is a long-time patron of ACT Players and his son was involved with our productions for multiple years. He has agreed to advise us on our Annual Appeal at no charge, and has submitted a proposal to work with us on building capacity for a capital campaign.

It is expected that the work with the consultant will begin in the first quarter of 2020 and span 4 months. The activities and budget for the first four months are detailed in the proposal. Depending on results and findings, the Board hopes to assess the feasibility of a capital campaign in the second or third quarter of 2020 and launch that campaign in the fourth quarter of 2020 or first quarter of 2021.