

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit www.chescocf.org

Date September 24, 2020

Contact Information

Organization Name: The Barn at Spring Brook Farm
Address: 360 Locust Grove Rd.
Phone: 610-793-1037
Website: www.springbrook_farm.org
Year Incorporated: 2005
FEIN: 20-3417567

ED/CEO Name: Nan Latona
ED/CEO E-mail: nan.latona@springbrook_farm.org
Board Chair Name: Sharon Cichocki
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Nan Latona
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: The mission of The Barn is to enrich the lives of children with disabilities through animal-assisted activities

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): The Barn serves children from throughout Chester County and surrounding neighborhoods.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: Children, ages 2 to 12 years old, who live in Chester County and the surrounding counties and who have physical, cognitive and/or developmental disabilities gain short and longer term benefits from our programs. During 2019, our core staff of 3 fulltime employees served 336 children through 411 program placements of which 68% had autism spectrum as a primary or secondary diagnosis.

Annual Budget \$ 306,189	3	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
80 % of budget for program expenses	13	# of Board Volunteers
12 % of budget for administrative expenses	293	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
8 % of budget for fundraising expenses	8,995	# of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: To date in 2020: Andrew & Sharon Cichocki: \$25,600; Robert & Jennifer McNeil: \$15,000; Michael & Anne Moran: \$10,142

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building or General Operating ?

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: The Barn will be grateful for Donor Advised support in any amount. We welcome visits from the CCCF donors and advisory staff. Thank you for the opportunity to update our information and for your willingness to share it with your donors.

Proposal Summary: We are seeking general operating funding to support our four signature programs offered annually March through the end of November: Camp Geronimo, Individual Programs, Educational Field Trips and Socialization Events. Each program provides an unmatched degree of individualized attention and programming designed to advance the health, development and wellbeing of differently-abled children through animal-assisted activities that have proven and documented results. The Barn at Spring Brook Farm strives to ensure that our quality programs are accessible and affordable to all who wish to participate regardless of their financial means. Each year, in addition to self-subsidizing our programs so they remain affordable, over \$10,000 is allocated for need-based tuition assistance for children whose families might be faced with financial hardship.

Grant Proposal Narrative
Chester County Community Foundation ~ September 2020

Organization Overview

The concept for The Barn was conceived in 2004 initially as a passion project of founder Mary Beth Drobish, owner of the beautiful 17.5-acre West Chester, PA farm property on which The Barn resides. Following the death of her husband, Mrs. Drobish felt called to combine her love of children with her passion for farm animals and sought to develop an environment where the two could co-exist in a healing way. She believed that children who are differently-abled would benefit physically, psychologically, cognitively and developmentally from interactions with specially-selected, kid-sized farm animals. In 2005, The Barn was incorporated as a 501(c) (3) organization and shortly thereafter welcomed children with disabilities through its doors and into its lush pastures. A core staff, dedicated volunteers and health profession students/interns achieve our mission through our signature programs offered annually March through November—Camp Geronimo, Individual Programs/Life Skills Development, Socialization Events and Educational Field Trips. During 2019, our core staff of three fulltime employees served the needs of 336 children in 411 program placements and nearly 300 volunteers provided 8,995 hours of service.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of children with disabilities through animal-assisted activities. Each animal in our program is specially selected for its suitability to work with children with disabilities. Among them are miniature horses, miniature Sicilian donkeys; Baby Doll sheep, Nigerian goats, rabbits, hens and a potbellied pig. The Barn itself is a fully handicapped-accessible bank-barn and was constructed with the special needs of children with disabilities in mind. Outside, in addition to a chicken coop housing our hens, children can explore multiple gardens, fields, and forested areas. A specially-designed wheelchair-accessible hay wagon provides trips around the property and a handicapped-accessible tree house lovingly built by volunteers offers a peaceful place for children to spend time in nature. An Outdoor Learning Center established in 2019 currently includes sensory gardens, raised beds for growing treats to feed our animals and a labyrinth. Additional elements are planned for this year and next. Our kid-sized animals provide a range of learning opportunities derived from walking, grooming and feeding them- leading to higher levels of task management and enhanced communication and socialization skills for the children. The bond between the animals and the children we serve is extraordinarily empowering and life-enriching—and we believe it is key element that sets our program apart from others in the region.

The Children We Serve ~ Statement of Need

The children we serve, ages 2 to 12 years old, are from Chester County and surrounding communities. Some of the common diagnoses of the children are: autism spectrum disorder (ASD); Down syndrome; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; cerebral palsy; physical disabilities; epilepsy and seizure disorders; genetic disorders; and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Over the last several years, The Barn has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of children with ASD and 68% of all the children we served in 2019 had ASD as a primary or secondary diagnosis. The numbers of children and families affected by emotional, physical and developmental disabilities in our region continues to grow. **The 2015 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 3,662 children with disabilities were living in Chester County alone, 3% of all children under the age of 18.** These numbers do not take into account the staggering new statistics on ASD. According to the Centers for Disease Control:

- One in every 59 children is now diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- ASD is about 4.5 times more common among boys (1 in 42) than among girls (1 in 189) and is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- About 1 in 6 children has a developmental disability.

COVID-19's Impact on and Response to The Barn's Programs for Children with Disabilities

Upon the outbreak of COVID-19, The Barn suspended all programs to keep our children, parents, staff and volunteers safe.

While not as effective as the one-on-one (volunteer-to-child ratio) programs we're known for, we pivoted to develop and deliver several virtual and tele-intervention programs for our children to maintain interaction with our animals, natural spaces and skilled volunteers, while enabling us to retain the relationships we have with the families we serve.

Throughout June, 2020 a team of volunteer nurse practitioner students from the University of Pennsylvania worked with The Barn to research and establish comprehensive health-safety and cleaning protocols in preparation for the time when we could welcome children back to The Barn.

The following programs are overseen by our Program Manager, Annie Kozicki, COTA/L, assisted by volunteer occupational therapy and nurse practitioner students from area universities:

- **Spring Brook Spotlight**--a virtual program highlighted interesting features of Spring Brook Farm, The Barn's animals and our neighbors such as Baily's Dairy and Northbrook Market was presented via Facebook or FB Live.
- **Zoom with the Animals**--an interactive exchange between participating children and a facilitator, was featured each week with a different Barn animal and related games.
- **Story Time with the Barn** featured a live reading of a nature based or animal themed story by a different Barn staff member or volunteer each week.
- **Virtual Socialization Events:** seasonal socialization events hosted by The Barn, featuring a live, interactive exchange between participants and Barn staff and volunteers featuring games and activities with our animals delivered via Zoom.

- We piloted a virtual fee-based **Special Summer Session** in August. This program was attended by 11 children and delivered daily via Zoom so they could see and interact with each other. Each day was a little different and featured a variety of activities such as games, music therapy, animal yoga, dance and crafts. Participating children received an activity box filled with everything they needed to engage in the upcoming week's activities.
- Once Chester County entered its *Green Phase* and opened up with some eased restrictions, we launched a fee-based **Family Barn Visit** program as an option for summer "in-person" programming for our already-engaged families to avoid the new family orientation process we normally require. Each day one child under the direct supervision of at least one adult household member was guided by our Program Manager or an occupational therapy student volunteer from a distance of 6' to participate in animal-assisted and nature-based activities.
- Unable to host visiting classrooms from area schools for in-person **Educational Field Trips**, we are offering a pre-recorded digital field trip to teachers at no charge, as well as a live version using Zoom, should teachers prefer a more immersive experience for their students. Both the live and pre-recorded field trips have been received very well so far, and we anticipate getting even more interest as we draw closer to the start of the school year. Again, on the bright side, through these virtual offerings we have the ability to reach significantly more children with disabilities regardless of their location.
- Using the same parent-assisted model as the summer's Family Barn Visits, our **Individual Programs** are offered during the school year in four-week sessions of one hour per week, per child. Three children are served Monday-Friday afternoons (one per hour 2pm-6pm with 30 minutes between each for sanitization) and are structured to address the goals noted in each child's Barn Activity Plan (see description below).

Our Traditional Programs

For now, there is a "new normal" at The Barn but, on the bright side, even when things return to the "old normal," we will have successfully created an array of virtual programming we can offer to children whose health is too compromised to participate in our regular "in-person" programs. Our traditional programs include:

- **Camp Geronimo**, our most popular program, provides up to 96 children ages 6 to 12 a unique summer day camp experience - an opportunity to have fun in a safe, secure setting while learning new skills that address their specific needs. All six of our 1-week camp sessions are overseen by a certified Physical Therapist with expertise in adaptive recreational therapy. Our unique one-to-one ratio of counselors to campers allows children with a range of abilities to participate in summer camp, truly a first for many of them. A Registered Nurse is on site each day of camp to ensure each child's medical needs are met.
- Our **Individual Programs**, offered to children ages 2 to 12 once a week for twelve-week sessions, provide one-on-one therapy with an experienced volunteer. Our staff works with parents and guardians to develop an individualized Barn Activity Plan for each child to help set goals, track progress and to complement any existing therapy or education. Examples of goals include improving fine motor skills, developing communication skills and building self-esteem.
- We also provide an informal **Life Skills/Professional Development** for individuals aged 18 to 25 with a variety of disabilities. Our full-time facilities manager dedicates approximately 20% of his time to the oversight of this program as he manages students from the Chester County Intermediate Unit, Elwyn School and MelMark, as well as other young adults from families served by The Barn.
- The Barn offers four annual **Socialization Events** geared to local families who have children with disabilities. These include Autumn Festival, Summer Splash, Spring Fling and Pancake Palooza. The goal of these events is to provide our families further opportunities to interact with one another and with the Barn staff and animals.
- In addition, each year 12 **Educational Field Trips** are provided to groups of students from local schools and programs such as the Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU), the Arc of Chester County, Greenwood Elementary School, Overbrook School for the Blind, and St. Edmund's Home for Children among others. Each group brings their own counselors and aides and sets goals in conjunction with the Barn's staff. Children, parents and staff participating in these field trips are often amazed at the extent of the hands-on interaction involved.

In addition to serving the needs of our children, The Barn continues to serve as an **experiential learning facility** for occupational and physical therapy, kinesiology, special education teaching and social work students and interns from several colleges and universities in the Delaware Valley, including Temple University, Salus University, West Chester University, University of the Sciences, and Philadelphia University. Our dual focus advances the health and wellbeing of our children and their families, while furthering the education of future specialized healthcare professionals.

On a modest annual budget of \$306,189, The Barn at Spring Brook Farm strives to ensure that our quality programs are accessible and affordable to all who wish to participate regardless of their financial means. Each year, in addition to self-subsidizing our programs so they remain affordable, over \$10,000 is allocated for need-based tuition assistance for children whose families might be faced with financial hardship. By opening our doors to all who wish to participate, not just to those who can afford it, we are able to engender greater diversity and inclusion within our participant population and also extend the reach of our programs as a whole. Annually, The Barn provides approximately 31% of the children we serve with scholarships so they may participate in Individual Programs and/or Camp Geronimo. Last year financial aid scholarships were provided to 45% of children in our Spring Individual Program; 100% in our Summer Individual Program and for our fall Individual programs 44% will receive scholarships. Annually, 31% of Camp Geronimo participants received needs based scholarships.

Impact and Evaluation

Each child is unique in personality, needs and goals. However, all children experience The Barn's beautiful, engaging, peaceful and fun environment, where evidence-based progress is made by allowing them to enjoy and grow from the same types of experiences provided to other children. A child's progress is measured by a variety of goals and objectives related to the child's personal achievements in the course of their activities at The Barn and at Camp Geronimo. Examples of goals include but are not limited to: identifying the feelings of adults, children, and animals based on body language/expressions; exhibiting positive social interactions with another child; demonstrating socially appropriate behaviors; making requests using full sentences; following multi-step directions; and engaging in "messy" activities without becoming upset. Here are just a few of the measurable objectives that we see repeatedly and that scientific research has proven:

- Children with disabilities have improved motor skills and muscle development as a result of grooming animals and taking them for walks around the property.
- Children who have difficulty interacting with others are better able to socialize thanks to repeated eye contact with animals and practicing basic introduction skills.
- Child will demonstrate socially appropriate behaviors such as waiting, turn taking, and sharing. Child will ask permission and wait for a response prior to moving to a location
- Children demonstrate improved communication skills, including participating in back and forth conversation that volleys at least three times

The Importance of Your Funding

It is our sincere hope that donors investing their philanthropic funds at **Chester County Community Foundation** will consider learning more about The Barn at Spring Brook Farm. Please also consider scheduling a visit so you may witness firsthand the small triumphs that lead to longer lasting progress for our children and their families. As a small organization with annual budget under \$310,000, charitable gifts of any size can make an impact on a child's life. The Barn is an amazing place where the simple act of petting a miniature horse or feeding a goat can change a child's day and more importantly their future. Thank you for your time and consideration.