



## CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

### **Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness**

Barnstone Art for Kids began delivering one-to-one mentored art programs in Fall 2011, receiving our 501(c)3 designation the following Spring. Since beginning our full-year programs, we have worked with hundreds of children and adolescents in the Chester County area. Barnstone Art for Kids addresses Adverse Childhood Experiences (abuse, neglect, household dysfunction) as a public health concern and has specifically developed the Power of Art, a trauma informed resiliency program, to reduce the risk of poor health and developmental outcomes for children who have experienced trauma.

Children with high ACE scores face many obstacles, including academic, social and developmental barriers. Barnstone Art for Kids seeks to fill the gap faced by local children between school and home supports. By providing one-to-one mentoring and a creative outlet, we are able to realize a consistent positive impact on the most at risk children in Chester County. Our outcomes, as measured by the Mentor Evaluation Tool, evidence positive growth across the areas of problem-solving, communication, social skills, and creativity. Our program is fueled each day by the passion and vigor of our employees and volunteers. This passion has continued unabated, even in these challenging times. Barnstone Art for Kids offers multiple program options, based on the reality that childhood trauma is a complex issue. To that end we offer the following direct services to children:

- **Power of Art** (5 to 12 years old)- our signature program pairs an adult, trained mentor with a child, and delivers a year of weekly trauma-informed art projects and curriculum. Up to 20 children per year are served in the 2 sections. Enrollment is conducted in September and January.

- **Emerging Voices** (13+ years old)- as adolescents develop and mature, Barnstone has reconstructed its original trauma-informed curriculum to meet the developmental needs of these young people. Up to 20 children per year are served in the 2 sections. Enrollment is conducted in September and January.

- **Beyond the Power** (all ages)- A monthly "graduate" program for participants who have completed the Power of Art. Beyond the Power averages 12 children-participants in each of the monthly sessions.

- **On the Go** (all ages)- recognizing that families may have transportation issues, Barnstone created it's On the Go program that delivers art-making and support to children at 4 community locations around Phoenixville. Enrollment is rolling and the groups can vary in size.

- **Summer Session** (all ages)- too often, children in our community are left with too few options for meaningful, fun activities during the Summer months. The Summer Session workshops are based on the concepts of mindfulness, planning, daily attention to detail, reflection, and personal growth. In 2021, Barnstone expanded its enrollment to children and teens, who participated in a 6-week curriculum delivered from June to August.

Additionally, Barnstone Art for Kids also works to educate the public about issues of mental health, childhood trauma, and a variety of self-care topics. Our **Awareness Program** delivers psycho-educational presentations to parents, teachers, professionals, or other interested community members. These presentations are led by Barnstone staff, use experiential activities and multimedia to bring critical information to the public, raising awareness and calling us all to action!

While these services continue to grow and evolve, we also experienced significant changes as a result of the pandemic. In the final analysis, these changes appear to have been silver linings that have shown us some new opportunities. The first "lesson" has been that our sessions can work virtually! Both our art-making and Awareness activities saw no decline in attendance of participants. This indicates that our artists and enrollees remained interested and engaged. This also had the added benefit of having people join from wherever they were. We had participants attend sessions from Georgia and even California!

The reach of our "On the Go" and "Awareness Program" just got a whole lot more exciting! Another unintended benefit has been the creative collaborations that have arisen. In the face of the pandemic, organizations appeared to look to one another to solve problems. While we have always been a willing partner, the level of openness to new ideas and solutions has been amazing. This has found its way fully into our current strategic planning effort and we are excited to expand our collaborations!

### **Funding request**

Our goal with this request is to update and/or replace our technology at Barnstone Art for Kids. This capacity-building project relates directly to aspects of our recent Strategic Plan effort, and is a critical need for our organization.

Our reliance on technology has only grown over the years, especially during the pandemic, but our technology resources have not been updated. The machines that we use today are nearly 7 years old, and experience poor performance issues on a daily basis. From storage issues to frozen programs, we are becoming expert at rebooting and working around the problems that we encounter. These instances are not merely inconveniences, but delay or halt our work regularly. A perfect example being that our Executive Director must send any print jobs to the Program Director in order to get them made into hard copies. While this may seem like a simple issue to fix, we have tried every solution and cannot rectify the glitch. Compounding this, we lack the technical know-how and resources needed to fix the issues. To that end we are proposing a technology update that would allow for the purchase of 2 new desktop computers and a more powerful, better quality printer for the organization. As we also use visual presentations as part of our teen and advocacy programs, we plan to purchase a new projector. Equally important, our request also allows for some limited tech support from a provider who is charging our non-profit on a sliding scale. This will allow our staff to call on this resource if tech issues arise again.

We recently updated only our internet hardware, and that expense was significant (\$700). We understand that these machines are costly, but we also know that we need technology that can host modern graphics and publishing programs, print high quality materials for our work and advocacy, and meet the needs of an expanding business. We have worked with a trusted tech professional and have developed our list based on the needs of our organization. These purchases address our ability to operate fluidly (**Self-Sufficiency**), and ultimately provide a clear path toward operational efficiency. The breakdown of anticipated costs is as follows:

- 2 new Apple computers: Apple iMac 24" model (3000)
- 1 new printer/scanner/copier: Brother MFC-L8900 (600)
- 1 new projector: Model TBD (500)
- Networking, data migration and set up costs (500)
- Tech support costs for one-year subscription (1200)

We understand that in order to achieve the goals and strategies in our Strategic Plan that we must invest in our current operation, build new elements, and continue to forge new partnerships. Each of the purchases outlined in this proposal serves these ends, and is vital to our survival as an organization. We are truly grateful to the Chester County Community Foundation for your ongoing support, and your championing of children's well-being. Thank you for considering our plans, and we hope that you share in our excitement to see them realized.