



## 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 proposal, *Building Our Future for Kids*, points directly to the recent goals and objectives completed as we have worked on a new Strategic Plan. To that end, our specific requests for support can be outlined by the organizational areas that will be addressed. The first of which addresses our goal to re-engage and maintain a strong community of volunteers, Mentors, and partners (**Organizational Structure**) at Barnstone Art for Kids. These groups are critical to Barnstone's immediate-future survival as our program model relies on Mentors, and many of our remote "On the Go" programs rely on our community partnerships. The importance of these relationships was further emphasized in our recently updated and approved Mission Statement, "Barnstone Art for kids uses the power of art and community connection to foster resilience in children facing adversity". It is our intention to produce a schedule of meetings and events over the year that will welcome partners to the barn to strategize, develop new ideas and deepen our connections. On an even larger scale we plan to host a Volunteer/ Mentor event designed to share Barnstone's plans for the future, re-inviting these amazing friends to join us as we continue to serve children. We anticipate that these meetings and the Mentor event will help ensure strong community ties and ultimately spread the good will to potential new volunteers, friends, and donors.

The second area that we will address will also have an impact on our **Organizational Self-Sufficiency** and **Building Our Brand**. We recognize that as a smaller nonprofit, we have a voice in our local community. In order to turn our volume up, so new donors and new audiences can be reached, we have proposed engaging in consultation with development and marketing professionals to develop and carry out strategies to increase our donor base, seek new areas for funding, and refresh our overall branding. We understand that the "marketplace" for donors has changed substantially over the years and the tools we use to engage our communities need to be up to date. While we understand that engaging consultants is a substantial cost up front, we anticipate using their expertise to create manageable, sustainable development and marketing plans that will move us forward over the next several years.

A similar investment in our future is more mundane, but as important to our daily functioning. Our reliance on technology has only grown over the years, but our technology resources have not been updated. Further, when a technology issue occurs, we lack the resources needed to fix the issue. To that end we are proposing a technology update that would allow the purchase of 2 new desktop computers (same specs as existing) and a more powerful, better quality printer for the organization. We recently updated only our internet hardware, and that expense was significant. 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. These purchases address our ability to operate fluidly (**Self-Sufficiency**).

Related to this is the need to increase our staffing. Barnstone currently operates with 1.5 FTE's. Over the last years we have understood that we need to raise that level to 2 full time staff. With your support, we would bridge that gap, increasing the hours of our half-time staff to .75. This would give us more time to

work in our programs, more time to outreach to the community, and ultimately more time to engage in activities that support the Mission of Barnstone Art for Kids (**Organizational Structure**).

Another area of focus for *Building Our Future for Kids* relates to our plan to increase our reach and impact (**Expand Beyond the Barn**). We have been given the opportunity to outfit a donated trailer that can be used for offsite programs, community events, or advocacy activities. The need to “leave the barn” and conduct our work in the communities we are serving is a central part of the future of Barnstone. Our fastest growing opportunities have been in our On the Go program offerings, and we are embracing this for our future. In our Strategic Plan we have outlined a plan to “fix” the trailer, build the interior to meet our mobile program needs, and decorate the exterior with Barnstone’s updated branding and logo. Our plan also includes the purchase of signage that can be used at events, to identify and orient the community to Barnstone and our work. We anticipate these expenditures to be significant as well, but again, these represent durable goods that can be used for years to come.

*Building Our Future for Kids* is an ambitious proposal that exceeds our typical requests. 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 aspects 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.