



February 21, 2024

The Neil Joines Foundation C/O The Chester County Community Foundation
28 W. Market St.
West Chester, PA 19382

Dear Neil Joines Foundation Fund Advisors,

The Garage Community & Youth Center (GYC) continues to identify the needs of our students through organizational and constituent collaboration and maintains true partnerships for enduring success. Our programs provide for a vital population that may not have access to support based on various factors while maintaining cultural sensitivity and engaging their backgrounds in ways that empower them, not stifle their journey. Due to these factors in service and support implementation, The Garage is successfully operating as an essential "Third Place" within the community for both youth and their families. Third Places have clearly demonstrated success and impact on communities, particularly those that have unique needs such as Southern Chester County. However, with the past ten years of increasing digital and virtual resources and the crushing blow of the COVID-19 pandemic, Third Places are at risk. The services provided as a Third Place are more essential than ever as needs deepen, inflation increases, and challenges arise.

The Garage recognized these trends and through a successful capital campaign raising over \$900,000, GYC was able to physically expand through the purchase of our Avondale building, replacing our West Grove space and expanding program space by over 7,000 square feet! With this milestone achieved, The Garage was able to create a fully equipped Makerspace, including supplies and tools for various forms of art and skills including pottery, painting, woodworking, and more. Garage students are able to access this space and work in a creative a la carte fashion and use the space for expression, problem-solving, and skill-building.

The Garage Makerspace addresses the needs of our community by responding to the gaps in our provisions as an organization, but also the gaps in the services and spaces for the community we serve. The Garage provides valuable services during out-of-school time hours including academic support, vocational guidance, and social-emotional programs for positive youth development. GYC's Makerspace expands the scope of our already successful programs and provides a specific space for our youth and community to explore creative hobbies, express themselves through art, and learn new skills while having a safe, equipped, and reliable space. The creation of this space increases the offerings, services, programs, and therefore the capacity of GYC as a currently successful Third Place, but also allows for a creative celebration of our unique LatinX community, exploration of arts and creative-based careers for our population, and rental income generation for program sustainability.

It is the goal of Garage programs, including our Makerspace, to represent our thriving Latinx community, its creative strengths, and our community's demonstration of resilience and rebirth in the wake of the pandemic. Garage Makerspace includes supplies and tools for various forms of art and skills including pottery, painting, woodworking, and more. Garage students are able to access this space and work in a creative a la carte fashion and use the space for expression, problem-solving, and skill-building. Further, the space is open to the community for classes, rental opportunities, and local art events and will simultaneously provide programs and generate revenue. The Garage's Executive Director, Kristin Proto, is excited to expand our organizations ability to cater to the importance of arts in students' lives, "We recognize that having a creative outlet and the resources to express one's self is an integral part of being a person, and that's what this space is going to provide kids, one that will be messy and fun and expressive. For our population in particular, these are the things that help them process through the challenges of life – to have a space where they can express themselves, and have an opportunity to try new things and have the time and space to do that".

The Garage anticipates serving 375 individual students over the 2023 24 school year would like to purchase various art supplies to outfit the Makerspace including clay tools, paint brushes, paint, canvases, aprons, and clay among other items.

The Garage respectfully requests \$2,000 from The Neil Joines Foundation to help fund supplies purchases for the Makerspace at The Avondale Garage. On behalf of our Board, Staff and Students, thank you for the kind consideration.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin Proto".

Kristin Proto, Executive Director