



# I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date: 4/10/2024

### Contact Information

Organization Name: Arts Holding Hands and Hearts  
Address: 110 East State St, Kennett Square PA 19348

Phone: 484-883-2367  
Website: www.AHHAH.org  
Year Incorporated: 2013  
FEIN: 46-2698782

ED/CEO Name: Jan Michener  
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Board Chair Name: Meredith Nussbaumer  
Board Chair Approval (check here):   
Primary Contact Name: Jan Michener  
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### Organization Information:

#### Field/s of Interest:

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

**Mission:** AHHAH’s mission is to transform youth, families, and communities through literacy, mindfulness, and the arts for equity and justice.

**Geographic Area Served** (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): We serve all of Chester County, but we are primarily focused in Coatesville, Kennett Square, West Chester, Downingtown, Oxford, and Phoenixville.

**Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** AHHAH works with underserved and at-risk youth in Chester County, serving approximately 8,500 annually through direct programming. We currently have over 8,000 children aged 0-5 participating in our Chester County Imagination Library (CCIL) program, and countless others utilizing our 100+ Pop-Up Lending Library (PULL) locations in the county.

**Annual Budget** \$360,645      1.5 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff  
83 % of budget for program expenses      11 # of Board Volunteers  
15 % of budget for administrative expenses      20 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers  
2 % of budget for fundraising expenses      1,000 # of Volunteer Hours  
100 % total

**Top 3-5 funding sources:** Foundations, program revenue, fundraising events, individual donors

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

**Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation:** \$10,000

**Proposal Summary:** AHHAH requests funding to continue and expand our literacy, mindfulness, and arts programs. Specifically, after increasing enrollment and impact by nearly 25% in the past year, we are requesting funding for our CCIL program, which provides books each month to over 8,000 Chester County children, many of whom live in poverty. This program helps to increase literacy and close the educational gap for some of Chester County’s youngest learners.



## II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

*Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.*

### 1. Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

AHHAH serves our most vulnerable youth in Chester County, with a primary focus on residents of Coatesville and Kennett Square. Our mission is to transform youth, families, and communities through literacy, mindfulness, and the arts. AHHAH uses four strategies (C.A.L.M.) to offset the stressful effects of long-term poverty:

- Community partnerships and programs connect and engage youth, families, and seniors
- Arts programming encourages youth to explore their authentic voices
- Literacy initiatives enable youth to succeed by becoming powerful readers, writers, and thinkers
- Mindfulness instruction improves attention, self-awareness, self-regulation, and resilience in children, teachers, and caregivers

Since our inception in 2013, we have been guided by the vision that every child in Chester County should have the tools and opportunities they need to achieve their highest capacity. AHHAH's first programs were trauma-sensitive yoga and expressive arts classes for youth in the Chester County Youth Center (CCYC), a detention center in Pocopson. Since more than 40% of individuals at CCYC are from Coatesville, AHHAH made Coatesville our base, with a goal of reducing the systemic flow of Coatesville children into the juvenile justice system. Since then, we have consistently and strategically added programming to support this goal.

Our fastest growing and most successful programs have been our Chester County Imagination Library (CCIL) and Pop-Up Lending Library (PULL) programs to support youth literacy. These programs help to increase student achievement and close the educational gap for some of Chester County's most at-risk youth. CCIL currently serves over 8,000 children each month, and countless others utilize our PULL stations. Ultimately, with the support of our community, we believe CCIL has the potential to serve 15-18,000 children in Chester County.

With a growing recognition of the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) on disadvantaged children, our trauma-informed programs take a distinctive approach to helping children manage stress and focus attention.

AHHAH believes that challenges associated with ACEs can be addressed with three highly integrated disciplines – literacy, mindfulness, and the arts – to help children achieve a different understanding of themselves, their place in the world, and their futures.

**Literacy:** We focus on literacy because a child's ability to read directly impacts their ability to succeed. Studies have shown that reading below grade level lowers a child's chances of completing their education and it increases their chances of dropping out of school and entering the juvenile justice system.

**Mindfulness.** All our face-to-face programs are trauma-informed and teach children affected by ACEs techniques to calm their minds, regulate their emotions, and focus their attention. Mindfulness practice is woven into all our classes.

**Arts:** Youth in AHHAH's writing and filmmaking programs learn they have agency and impactful voices. Exposing them to their own power to create helps build the self-esteem required to believe that change is possible. Participating with others in group creativity and storytelling, children learn empathy and cultivate caring communities.

## 2. Funding request

### Description of key initiatives

AHHAH has two core programming areas serving at-risk youth in Chester County:

#### **Youth Literacy and Mindfulness Programs**

##### *The Chester County Imagination Library (CCIL)*

In 2021, AHHAH initiated the CCIL in partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The program sends one free book per month to the home of any Chester County child aged 0-5 years who registers. Currently, over 8,000 children have active CCIL registrations, and in our 2024 fiscal year, we will ship over 80,000 books. Ultimately, we believe the program has the potential to serve 15-18,000 children in Chester County, imparting a profound impact on the lives of the county's youngest residents.

##### *Pop-Up Lending Library (PULL)*

Working in tandem with our CCIL and with the same goal of closing the educational gap, our PULL program builds, installs, stocks, and maintains 100+ lending library stations in schools, parks, and playgrounds in southern Chester County – particularly in the Coatesville and Kennett Square areas.

##### *Preschool Classes*

AHHAH's preschool programs teach children affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) how to calm their minds, better control their emotions, and focus their attention. Children in AHHAH's preschool programs learn they have an impactful and unique voice, enhancing their sense of agency.

#### **Restorative Justice Programs**

##### *Restorative Justice Expressive Arts and Mindfulness Programs*

Our Restorative Justice programs use the expressive arts to communicate the experiences of the young people involved and impacted by the juvenile justice system to their peers and the community at large. We use trauma responsive and mindfulness techniques to create safe and supportive spaces for the youth to share their authentic voices and experiences.

In our **writing programs**, students reflect on and respond to their experiences with incarceration or removal from the home. Their writing is collected, compiled, and has been published in three consecutive volumes – *Justice Restored 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0*.

As part of our **arts programs**, we conduct after-school art classes with students in the Chester County Futures program in Coatesville, Kennett, Oxford, and Phoenixville high schools. Their artwork has also been displayed throughout the county, and was most recently on exhibit at the Brandywine YMCA during February of this year, highlighted in their Black History Art and Book Fair.

Our **filmmaking programs** are transformative for our youth participants, not only teaching practical and team-building skills that can translate to meaningful employment, but also instilling them with confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Our film courses were established for youth on probation in Chester County to have the opportunity to learn valuable media production skills for film. We bring in industry experts in the fields of audio, photography, and even film robotics to teach our groups how to create, inspire, work as a team, and even create a business, culminating in the creation of the documentary "Invisible No More: Voices and Lives of Youth Impacted by the Carceral System."

### *Step Up, Step Out, Make a Difference (SUSO)*

SUSO is a self-care, resilience, and leadership program for girls in 8th-12th grade offered at the Brandywine Health Center in Coatesville, motivated primarily by our recognition that childhood trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) impact girls disproportionately and distinctively.

The program was created to support the girls of Coatesville in shifting their greater mental well-being from "fighting" to "leading." Our goal is to create a group of girls that are not only better able to improve their own physical and mental wellbeing, but to be able to do that through the community as well.

### **Specific needs & issues to be addressed**

Academic studies on the social psychology of education have shown that books in the home are the single largest indicator of academic success — surpassing income, parents' education, family composition, and all other factors. Further, the World Economic Forum reports that a child growing up in a home with at least 80 books will have greater literacy and numeracy in adulthood, and that a home library can promote reading and math skills more than college alone. Study after study has shown that the number of books at home is a strong indicator of student achievement, and that providing books to low-income households helps to close the academic gap.

AHHAH's programs are expansive in scope but interconnected. Over 1/3 of children throughout the Chester County area are reading and writing below grade level. We know that reading below grade level lowers a child's chances of completing their education and succeeding and increases their chances of dropping out of school and becoming incarcerated. Our youth literacy and mindfulness programs share a causal relationship with our restorative justice programs, as one participant population funnels into the next. Our complementary proactive and reactive programming takes a trauma-informed approach to education and healing to support kids across the spectrum, increasing resiliency and creating positive pathways toward productive and fulfilling futures.

### **Why it is important to fund this now**

Many of our programs are based in Coatesville, which is the most poverty-stricken municipality in Chester County. Compared to national and state averages, the residents of Coatesville are young, low-income, BIPOC, and victimized by violence.

It is imperative to support this at-risk population and provide resources for the youngest and most vulnerable in Chester County to close the educational gap and increase rates of educational mobility and future success.

With support from the Chester County Community Foundation, we will continue our transformative programming in 2024, which will proactively support educational efforts and build resilience in our youngest residents, while reactively teaching and empowering Chester County teens to escape the school-to-prison pipeline and put them on a path toward brighter futures.

### **How impact & results will be demonstrated**

Annually, across AHHAH's direct programming, we serve approximately 8,500 individuals, including over 8,000 children served by our CCIL. During our 2024 fiscal year, we will ship over 80,000 books as part of this program, increasing overall literacy and future academic achievement for our youngest residents in Chester County.

The impacts of our Restorative Justice programs are profound for each participant. The young people participating in our programming emerge with increased confidence, better conflict management skills, greater resilience, and awareness of their potential to pursue rewarding careers and opportunities in higher education.

As part of our youth mindfulness and leadership programs, we issue pre- and post-program surveys collecting data on self-regulation, stress management, attitude changes, and plans for the future.

### III. ATTACHMENTS

#### *E-mail or mail this support information*

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
  2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
  3. Most recent annual report & financial statement, audited if available
  4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
  5. If capacity building initiative, itemized budget (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable)
  6. Current strategic plan. If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.
- Use this form @ [www.chescof.org](http://www.chescof.org) to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
  - **Email proposals to [grants@chescof.org](mailto:grants@chescof.org)**
  - Proposals are considered "complete" when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**.
  - Proposals are shared electronically and online with Fund Advisors, Donors & Grant Panels.
  - Per IRS Regulations, applicants must be charitable, tax exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) certification & cannot be individuals.

Please contact Grants Administrator Kevin Baffa at  
(610) 696-8211 [grants@chescof.org](mailto:grants@chescof.org) with questions.



## WHAT IS CAPACITY BUILDING?

**Capacity building helps bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, in order to more effectively & efficiently fulfill its mission.**

Capacity building may include (but is not limited to) projects which address:

- **MISSION, VISION & STRATEGY**  
Organizational Assessment - Strategic Planning - Financial Planning
- **GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP**  
Board Development - Executive Transition/Succession Planning - Leadership Development - Staff Training & Professional Development
- **PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS**  
Coalition Building – Collaboration - Mergers & Acquisitions - Strategic Restructuring
- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING**  
Major Gift Donor Identification, Cultivation, Development & Stewardship - Development Campaigns (Annual, Capital, Planned Giving) - Earned Income Development - Social Enterprise Feasibility & Development - Marketing, Branding & Communications
- **TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS**  
Business Continuity Planning - Financial Management - Human Resources - Volunteer Management - Industry Certification - Risk Management - Technology Improvements