

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

Contact Information

Organization Name: The Barn at Spring Brook Farm
Address: 360 Locust Grove Road West Chester, PA 19380
Phone: 610-793-1037
Website: www.springbrook-farm.org
Year Incorporated: 2005
FEIN: 20-3417567

Date 5/6/2024

ED/CEO Name: Andrea Abernethy
ED/CEO E-mail: andrea.abernethy@springbrook-farm.org
Board Chair Name: Erica Kilpatrick-Galbreath
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Andrea Abernethy
Primary Contact E-mail: andrea.abernethy@springbrook-farm.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: The mission of The Barn at Spring Brook Farm is to enrich the developmental skills and lives of children with disabilities through animal-assisted and nature-based experiences.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

The Barn serves all of Chester County and the surrounding communities.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: The Barn serves children and youth with physical disabilities, special needs, and other neurodivergent conditions, ages 2 to 12 years old, and represents a wide diversity of religious, ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds. 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. In 2023, 480 children were served for a total of 963 non-duplicated service hours.

Annual Budget \$ <u>555,158</u>	<u>4.5</u> # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>82</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>14</u> # of Board Volunteers
<u>12</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>308</u> # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>6</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>8,500</u> # of Volunteer Hours
<u>100</u> % total	

Top 3-5 funding sources: Sharon & Andrew Cichocki, Bob & Jennifer McNeil, McCausland Foundation, Vermeil Foundation, BlackRock Foundation

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

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 7,500

Proposal Summary: The Barn's mission has been to serve children up to age 12, however, in 2023 a program offering services to youth 13+ was piloted. Grant funding would be directed specifically to expanding the services offered to youth in this age group, filling a vital community need for supportive extracurricular activities.



Grant Narrative for CCCF General Operating Funds

Organizational Overview

The Barn at Spring Brook Farm (“The Barn”) is in its 18th year of providing services to area children with physical disabilities and a range of special needs. It began in 2004 as a dream of Mary Beth Drobish, founder and former owner of the property on which The Barn resides, who felt called to combine her passion for farm animals with her love for children. She believed that children with disabilities would benefit physically, psychologically, cognitively, and developmentally from interactions with specially selected farm animals. Located on a 17.5-acre farm in West Chester, The Barn was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 2005 and opened its doors in 2006.

Staff, dedicated volunteers, and health profession students/interns achieve our mission through our annual signature programs offered March through November—Camp Geronimo, Individual Programs/Life Skills Development, Socialization Events, and Educational Field Trips. Through our Professional Clinical Affiliation Program, we serve as an experiential learning facility for occupational and physical therapy, nursing, and psychology students from many colleges and universities in the Delaware Valley, including Temple University, The University of Pennsylvania, West Chester University, and Thomas Jefferson University. Over the course of 2023, our core staff of three full-time and two part-time employees served 384 children for a total of 3,067 non-duplicated service hours. 308 volunteers provided nearly 8,500 hours of service in support of The Barn and the children and families we served. Our programs and reputation continue to attract experienced and dedicated volunteers who provide unprecedented one-to-one counsel and care for each of our child participants.

Mission

Our mission is to enrich the developmental skills and lives of children with disabilities through animal-assisted and nature-based experiences. 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, and a potbellied pig. Most of the animals are rescues and are lovingly cared for by both the staff and the program participants. 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 the key element that sets our program apart from others in the region.

The Barn itself is a fully handicapped-accessible bank barn and was constructed with the special needs of children with disabilities in mind. Outside, children can explore a beautifully preserved environment that includes 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 includes sensory gardens, raised beds for growing vegetables which are donated to our local food bank, an outdoor music scape, a mud kitchen, and a labyrinth.

Need for Services

The children we serve, ages 2 to 12 years old, are primarily from Chester County and the surrounding areas. 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 over half of all the children we served in 2023 had ASD as a primary or secondary diagnosis. The number of children and families affected by emotional, physical, and developmental disabilities in our region continues to grow. The 2020 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 144,841 children with disabilities were living in Chester County alone, or 5.5% of all children under the age of 18.

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.

The Barn's goal-based Individual Program is designed to advance a variety of life skills and provides an unmatched degree of personalized attention to each child. Unlike other extracurricular interventions, this program is designed to advance the children's health, learning development, and well-being.

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:

- 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.
- Children demonstrate socially appropriate behaviors such as waiting, turn-taking, and sharing.
- Children 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

In 2016, The Barn partnered with Dr. Page Buck, Associate Professor at West Chester University's Masters of Social Work Department, to conduct a university-approved research study about the impact the Barn's programs have specifically on children with autism spectrum disorders. Dr. Buck interviewed 10 families whose children participate in The Barn's programming. Each 60-90 minute interview took place in the families' homes and was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The findings were grouped into three main themes and subsequent 30-minute confirmation interviews were conducted with each family to review the findings. Dr. Buck now serves on The Barn's advisory board and has published the results of this study.

Grant Request

We are respectfully requesting a grant from the Chester County Community Foundation for \$7,500. Grant funding will be directed to the growth of programming for youth ages 13 and up. Until 2023, The Barn was only able to serve children until age 12. With a continuing need for supportive extracurricular activities, The Barn's programming has been at full capacity. Expanding our services to reach more individuals will have a dramatic impact on children, youth, and their families and is important to fund now.

The challenges faced by our children can negatively affect advancement in school, at home, and within social networks. Individuals with ASD and other disabilities may experience disparities in long-term health outcomes compared to the general population. These disparities can be attributed to a combination of factors, including both intrinsic characteristics associated with the disability and external factors related to healthcare access, comorbid conditions, and social determinants of health. The Barn's interventions contribute to the progress and development of each child who participates in programming and ultimately impact their overall well-being and the well-being of their entire family unit.

On a modest annual budget of about \$550,000, 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 \$17,000 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. It is our hope that you will consider learning more about The Barn at Spring Brook Farm. We invite you to schedule a visit so you may witness firsthand the small triumphs that lead to longer-lasting progress for participating children and their families. As a small organization, 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.



While we at The Barn witness smiles and improvements in the children every day, the best examples of success come from statements from the parents of the children we serve:

“(My child) loves The Barn, and looks forward to each (Individual Program) session. It’s a chance for him to be in an environment where he can be himself and just have fun...He’s gaining (the) valuable social and emotional skills he needs to help him navigate the world in his own way.”

“Our son absolutely loves helping take care of the animals and enjoying all the (Individual Program) has to offer. We noticed improvements in communication skills, attention, and ability to follow directions. “

“Her confidence around animals and her communication has improved tremendously. She continues to develop social-emotional skills through interactions with the animals.”