



February 19, 2025

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 is deeply committed to our mission of empowering youth to reach their potential through educational and emotional support, leadership development, and community engagement. Since its inception over two decades ago, Garage programs have served serve as a vital resource for at-risk youth in our community, offering them a safe space to learn, grow, and thrive, and we will continue to do so as long as we are in existence. Over 24 years later, The Garage's population continues to be presented with challenges that seem insurmountable, facing trends that directly hinder their quality of life. However, like the students and families we serve, our organization continues to learn, grow, adapt, and build resilience in a world where challenges and barriers seem overwhelming. We are honored to stand alongside our community, raising a voice for those who can't speak, running for those who can't walk, and embracing those who feel alone.

The Garage has excitedly taken many opportunities to grow our supports and services to provide direct offerings based on constituent feedback, both students and parents included. The past three years have been a time of deepened understanding of our organizational purpose, paired with a widened ability to support our community, creating an explosion of updates and changes to our operations. Our development of creative programs continued to flourish as The Garage commenced Performance Art programming in 2024. Our Performance Art coordinator, Amadeo Gomez, joined our team in early 2024, is a professional performer with theater, acrobatic, and dance background. These creativity based programs have been essential to the restoration of our students enthusiasm, confidence, and joy in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic's fear and isolation. Amadeo, a native Spanish speaker, ensures accessibility for all students who participate in these programs, regardless of language.

Our Performance Arts programs have become the perfect combination of physical activity, social-emotional learning, and confidence building within one activity offering. Workshops include weekly theater and improv classes hosted at The Kennett Library space, where over 30 students participate per week, Aerial silks dancing which research has proven to increase physical strength, discipline, and concentration, music lessons through donations of instruments and the time and talent of local musicians, and circus arts including stilt walking and juggling to embrace the joy of our kids simply being kids!

The Garage provides valuable services during out-of-school time hours including academic support, vocational guidance, and social-emotional programs for positive youth development. The Garage's Performing Arts programs 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 performance, 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 The Garage as a currently successful Third Place, but also allows for a creative celebration of our unique LatinX community.

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 425 individual students over the 2024-25 school year would like to purchase various supplies to support our Performance Arts Programs including stilt sets, juggling clubs, musical instruments, and potential field trip opportunities including participation in performance arts such as Cirque du Soleil and other local theaters.

The Garage respectfully requests \$2,500 from The Neil Joines Foundation to help fund supplies purchases for the Performing Arts Programs at The Garage. On behalf of our Board, Staff and Students, thank you for the kind consideration.

Best Regards,

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

Kristin Proto, Executive Director