



Ojai Women's Fund

2023 Grant Nominees

■ ARTS

Ojai Festivals, LTD
Performances to Grow On

■ EDUCATION

Ojai Valley Youth Foundation
Secure Beginnings

■ ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Endowment Fund
Ventura Land Trust

■ HEALTH

Oaks Restorative Ranch
OjaiCARES

■ SOCIAL SERVICES

HELP of Ojai
Nate's Place, A Wellness and Recovery Center

■ ARTS

Ojai Festivals, LTD

Program: Artists-in-Residence

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ojai Music Festival requests a second year of funding for their Artists-in-Residence program. During this program, six musicians perform interactive concerts for about 450 students attending two OUSD elementary schools, and Sunset Elementary in Oak View. Students at each school will benefit by experiencing three presentations per year in their own classrooms. At each interactive Artists-in-Residence presentation, the musicians talk with the students about the instruments they play, the history and cultural background of the music they perform, as well as their own individual paths to becoming professional artists. During this time of sudden change for students and families associated with OUSD schools, we believe that continuing our Artists-in-Residence program is essential in supporting the community by providing a reassuring sense of continuity.

COMMUNITY NEED

The Ojai Music Festival views the performance and enjoyment of music as a fundamental element in life. Music is one of the few human activities that allows for self-expression and group expression to interweave. Many of the students attending our local public schools come from low to moderate income families, which means that their exposure to live performances by professional musicians is often limited by family resources. Also, Sunset Elementary School relies on the Ojai Music Festival for its entire music education programming. With all of the changes happening in the OUSD, the need for continuity of programming and a safe outlet for conflicting emotions is particularly important. The Ojai Music Festival offers Artists-in-Residence to the schools free of charge.

POPULATION SERVED

About 450 students, ages 9-11, 50:50 male:female will be served at a combination of Topa Topa, Mira Monte, and Sunset elementary schools. Ethnic minorities are largely represented in the schools. The percent of students eligible for reduced or free lunch ranges from 49% to 68%.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

Goals: 1) Introduce students to quality music, performed live; 2) Develop the students' listening skills and concert manners; 3) Empower students to learn musical traditions; 4) Encourage students' own participation in music. Implementation: 1) Elementary school students at three schools will experience live music; 2) Each school will experience three separate, varied presentations; 3) We anticipate serving 16 classrooms. Evaluation: Data will be gathered from the performing musicians and from each classroom teacher. An Ojai Music Festival volunteer will observe the program to capture the number and depth of questions the students ask; the quality of responses; feedback from the classroom teachers; and the performers' experiences. Data will be entered into a rubric that will be reviewed by the BRAVO Education Coordinator and Ojai Music Festival staff.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

The Ojai Music Festival's BRAVO Education Coordinator Laura Walter will lead the program. Her academic credentials include degrees in music performance and postgraduate study in the fields of education and psychology. She has worked with general education students, atypical learners and at-risk youth to promote community, self-motivation, impulse control, song and movement. The primary collaborator is the Ojai Unified School District.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Artists-in-Residence is in its second year with a total cost of \$30,800. The grant request to Ojai Women's Fund of \$15,000 is primarily to pay for the musicians.

■ ARTS

Performances to Grow On

Program: Ojai Storytelling Festival

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1995, Performances to Grow On has presented audiences of all ages with educational, engaging and artistic performances that encompass a diverse variety of artistic and cultural traditions through renowned national and international artists and touring companies. PTGO has a strong commitment to arts education, fun experiential learning, and literacy improvement as evidenced by its programs, assemblies, workshops and school field trips in Ventura County and beyond. PTGO's eclectic programming provides social-emotional and educational enrichment to a very diverse audience from a variety of incomes and cultures by offering multi-cultural events that celebrate the history and diversity of the community. We believe in the power of live performance to expand our boundaries, to connect with others and to foster self-discovery.

COMMUNITY NEED

Nationally, mental health related emergency department visits in children ages 5-11 increased 24% from March to October of 2020; 31% in children ages 12 to 17. Studies document that exposure to and participation in the arts improves social-emotional well-being in adults and children. Recent studies report that students lost out on 35% of learning in the 2019-20 school year and are still catching up. A reputable study reports that exposure to the arts increases educational success, in part due to its effect on social-emotional well-being. Performances To Grow On brings the arts to the people who need it at a time when it is desperately needed. Without social-emotional wellness, it is nearly impossible to address learning loss.

POPULATION SERVED

About 3,000 people, including school children and adults, with a focus on inclusivity of the disabled population (25% of total attendees). Student demographics document a large representation of ethnic minorities.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

Goals: 1) Offer educational programs to students with outreach performances targeting students from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and ages from preschool to high school; 2) Offer workshops to increase skills in storytelling, communication, and public speaking; 3) Keep the practice of storytelling alive and relevant in this screen and technology era. Implementation: 1) Youth outreach performances are written into each storyteller's contract, with most programming offered free or reduced price; 2) Three Story Swap Workshops will be held throughout the weekend. Each workshop is attended by at least 2 featured storytellers and up to 20 amateur storytellers. Attendees are given 3-5 minutes to tell their story and are then given feedback from the featured teller. 3) A Story Slam and children's storytelling event are being added to the festival this year to encourage a younger crowd to attend. Evaluation: Participants receive a survey and the results are tabulated for guiding future events. Storytellers and staff provide observations of the successes and improvements to be made.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Executive Director Kara Lakes, who has been with PTGO for five years, oversees the program. A seasoned staff with program longevity handle production, set/stage, box office, technical, and administrative duties. A team of 25 dedicated volunteers have been serving PTGO for several years.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Ojai Storytelling Festival has a total cost of \$84,750. The grant request to Ojai Women's Fund of \$15,000 would cover a portion of the performing artists' fees.

■ EDUCATION

Ojai Valley Youth Foundation

Program: General Operating Support

Request: \$12,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year, it became apparent that the Ojai Unified School District was experiencing severe financial issues impacting our public schools' abilities to offer desired after-school educational programs to students. After meeting with Nordhoff High School Principal Dave Monson, it was determined that the Youth Foundation could greatly help the situation by providing enriching programs for junior high and high school students attending Nordhoff this coming school year. The programs being proposed include touring twelve college campuses, art instruction, music, cooking, improv, environmental activism, robotics, visits to ten cultural museums/institutions (Santa Barbara Museum of Art), and more. To meet this new challenge, the Youth Foundation is reaching out to the community for needed funding as it gears up to provide these programs for Ojai students.

COMMUNITY NEED

For over 25 years, the Ojai Valley Youth Foundation has been very involved in providing educational programming and teen comradery opportunities for junior high and high school students in the Ojai Valley introducing hundreds of these young people in Ojai's public schools to the core values of personal development built on the principles of integrity, leadership, resiliency, charity, and most importantly friendship. This year, it became apparent that the Ojai Unified School District was experiencing severe financial issues impacting public schools' abilities to offer desired after-school educational programs to students. To meet this new challenge, the Youth Foundation is reaching out to the community for needed funding as it gears up to provide these programs for Ojai students.

POPULATION SERVED

Programs offered by the Youth Foundation are primarily only offered to public school and home-schooled students in the Ojai Valley. These programs have averaged around 14 students per each program. The Youth Foundation is proposing to host around 15 programs next year directly engaging approximately 210 students in our local junior high and high school. These programs are and always have been available to students of any race/ethnicity, economic profile, gender, and who are junior high or high school age.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

In addition to the above mentioned, the following programs have also been proposed to be offered to both junior high and high school students for the next school year 2023-2024 at Nordhoff: Rock Music Program, Hiking & Overnight Backpacking, Auto Mechanics, Photography/Filmmaking, Backyard Organic Farming, Sheriff Dept Explorers, VC Humane Society volunteering, tour 12 college campuses, and the Spring Leadership Program. The programs are expected to be scheduled as "after-school" programs and some programs will likely be scheduled on weekends. Nordhoff will be supplying the classroom location where the on-campus programs will be hosted. At the end of each educational program, an evaluation sheet will be filled out by students in order to measure each program's success. The two evaluation points that are most important to the Youth Foundation are: did the student learn something new and would they recommend the program to other students?

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Jamie Fleming is Executive Director and Franci Nelson is President of the Board. The success of the Youth Foundation over the years to provide these valuable educational programs to students in Ojai schools is a direct result of the proven ability of the Youth Foundation's leaders to successfully engage and recruit talented people in the Ojai community year after year to volunteer their time, to share their expertise, and to also lead some of the programs. The Youth Foundation also works closely with and collaborates with the leaders of other organizations in the Ojai Valley who provide youth activities by helping to direct interested students to those programs such as Casitas Rowing, Sheriff's Explorer Program, Humane Society and the Green Valley Project. Nordhoff High School will supply the classroom location where the on-campus programs will be hosted.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

The Ojai Valley Youth Foundation is seeking a grant of \$12,000 in general operating support from the Ojai Women's Fund to support its programming for the 2023-2024 school year. The total budget for the organization is \$56,000.

■ EDUCATION

Secure Beginnings

Program: 1:1 Bilingual Parent/Caregiver Consultations

Request: \$11,435

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Secure Beginnings, founded in 2000, serves parents/caregivers during the first five crucial years of children's brain development to build secure attachment, social/emotional learning, and learning readiness. Sliding scale/free programs in English and Spanish provide education, counseling, peer support, mentorship, early intervention/referral, and diapers for low-income families. This grant will expand the successful 1:1 Parent/Caregiver Consultation Program addressing challenging life events and parenting/child development concerns for Spanish-speaking families. Funds will provide scholarships and allow recruiting/training a Spanish-speaking Parent/Caregiver Consultant, bilingual marketing, and administrative support. The program will promote resilience and responsive, nurturing care at challenging stages of child/family development and life circumstances, with improved lifelong physical, social, academic, mental, and emotional outcomes for Spanish- and English-speaking families in our community.

COMMUNITY NEED

1:1 Parent/Caregiver Consultations promote family resilience through ordinary and extraordinary times in early family life. The Parent/Caregiver Consultation Program was provided to English-speaking families with great success for ten years, serving families with children 0-5 who are developing typically and atypically. The intent is to expand the program to serve the Spanish-speaking community by recruiting/training a bilingual English/Spanish-speaking Parent/Caregiver Consultant. Consultations can be held at Secure Beginnings Center, family's homes, via Zoom, or phone. The consultant may pursue further consultation with a Senior Clinical Advisor, Early Intervention Specialist, or other professionals. In addition to insight, guidance, and tools, the Parent/Caregiver Consultation may recommend both in-house and community-based resources to "wrap around" the family with support.

POPULATION SERVED

The program will serve approximately 157 individuals in the Ojai Valley in 2024. These individuals will be families of childbearing age with children 0-5, plus kinship caregivers, adoptive/foster parents, and grandparents of all ages. Parent/Caregiver Consultations provide adult education/learning that bears impact on all children in the home. Approximately 85% of the adults they serve are female. ~27% are Latino and/or Spanish-speaking; Approximately 40% of participants fall into low or very low income categories as defined by Ventura County HUD.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

The goal across programs is to support parents/caregivers to provide the consistent, predictable and nurturing care that builds secure attachment. Funds will provide for constituent scholarships for low-income Ojai Valley residents, recruiting/training a Spanish-speaking Professional Parent/Caregiver Consultant, marketing in Spanish/English, essential administrative support, Executive Director oversight, and program evaluation/outcomes measurement.

Success is measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. Measurement of programmatic outcomes is gained by monitoring performance to budget and timeline, via participant surveys, narrative reports of key take-aways, and feedback regarding overall experience of the program.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Secure Beginnings draws from the professional experience, education, training, and expertise of Executive Director, Renee Mandala, and her team of educators and childhood specialists in developing and delivering curriculum/programming for families with young children. This includes the expertise of the Board and Wisdom Council, and the collaboration of local service organizations, nonprofits, schools, and over 50 hours monthly of both Spanish- and English-speaking volunteer support.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

The grant request of \$11,453 is to expand Secure Beginnings' already successful sliding scale/free 1:1 Parent/Caregiver Consultation Program to better serve Spanish-speaking families. Funds will provide scholarships and allow recruiting/training a Spanish-speaking Parent/Caregiver Consultant, bilingual marketing, and administrative support.

■ ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Endowment Fund

Program: Taft Gardens Native Pollinator Garden

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Pollinator Garden is to protect and preserve native pollinators through habitat restoration, increase understanding through scientific research, connect people with nature on a spiritual level, and educate the public about the vital importance of pollinators. Native pollinators are in decline due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and other environmental challenges. Pollinators are a cornerstone species for most of life on earth and we must protect and preserve them. Protecting native pollinators increases our food security by pollinating crops and protecting our climate by pollinating native plants. Educating the public about native pollinators helps them more deeply explore their relationship with nature and empowers them with knowledge on how they can do their part.

COMMUNITY NEED

The Pollinator Garden addresses the urgent need to protect endangered pollinators critical to our local ecosystem, including our agriculture industry. It's estimated that one of every three bites of food we eat is due to animal pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths, birds, bats, beetles and other insects. Habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants have contributed to a decline in many pollinator species.

POPULATION SERVED

The project will reach all visitors to The Taft Gardens & Nature Preserve and those who attend planned educational events in the Ojai Valley, including students, veterans, artists, scientists, and nature lovers ranging from babies to elders (much of the gardens are accessible to those with mobility issues). There were 2400 visitors in 2022 with more expected in 2023 and 2024 due to more planned events. Social media and the website broaden the reach.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

1) Increase biodiversity and pollinator abundance in the gardens. Measure through surveys. 2) Educate the public through signage. (Designs and content generated for the signs can be repurposed later for other informational material, including handouts and a dedicated Pollinator Garden webpage in English & Spanish, including information on how to create your own Pollinator Habitat Garden.) Measure # of visits to the garden and events and eventually by website traffic. 3) Special events guides will be able to incorporate the Pollinator Garden for more in-depth learning. Measured # of events and participants. 4) Picnic tables will enhance the use of the Pollinator Garden space by visitors, educators, and researchers. 5) The Art in Nature program will be able to incorporate the Pollinator Garden to help spread awareness. Measure # of artists and their work featuring pollinators and the plants they need to survive.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Garden Manager Alexandra Nicklin leads the project. She has a BA in Environmental Studies and a minor in geology from UCSB. Collaborations: plants are sourced from Growing Works Nursery, a Camarillo non-profit wholesale plant nursery and mental wellness program with Turning Point Foundation; a 30-year commitment with Ventura County Resource Conservation District, which is developing a Monarch and Pollinator Flyway Network; partnership with Native Monarchs, a conservation and habitat restoration effort; consulting with Loyola Marymount University to develop a long-range leadership and land management strategic plan; The Valor Project, an Ojai-based program for veterans, active duty, caregivers, families, and first responders; Villanova Preparatory School students volunteer in the gardens.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

The Pollinator Garden began in 2021 with \$4,000 in seed money from donors plus plant sale proceeds. The \$15,000 grant expands the Pollinator Garden with more plants, 2 weather-proof picnic benches for educational events and those with mobility issues, 50 botanical ID plant signs, and 7 colorful, permanent informational signs (66" w x 49" h) similar to those in the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

■ ENVIRONMENT

Ventura Land Trust

Program: Ventura Wild Outdoor Education

Request: \$10,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ventura Wild Program, the education arm of Ventura Land Trust (VLT), is an environmental education initiative aimed at connecting children with nature through immersive outdoor experiences. VLT is a trusted local organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing open space in Ventura County while providing increased free access to the community. VLT is seeking funds to support the ability of Ventura Wild, to provide more opportunities for low-income Ojai households to enroll in this program, allowing their children to engage with nature, learn about conservation, and develop a deeper connection to the local environment. These communities are traditionally marginalized in terms of outdoor access and supplemental educational programming. The grant will lead to more equitable access and generations of Ojai youth developing a greater appreciation of open spaces and connection to their environment and a more sustainable future.

COMMUNITY NEED

Ventura Wild (VW) serves over 820 students annually. Though these fee-based programs are subsidized by funding from VLT and its partners, tuition ranges from \$400-\$1200 depending on program type. This hinders enrollment numbers for the vast majority of low-income and BIPOC communities who wish to enroll their children but can't afford the tuition. Studies show that instilling the habit to recreate outdoors early in the developmental ages for children has a long-term impact on their physical and mental health.

POPULATION SERVED

Ojai households with children ages 3-18, with a focus on students of color and low-income. FACTS Management is used to perform private background and eligibility verification.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

Connect more low-income children to nature through joyful explorations, activities that explore senses and creativity, with a focus on social and emotional connections to self, each other, and the natural world. Quantitative analysis will show eligible application numbers, registration rates, and participation for the Ojai community. Qualitative data will be gathered from feedback tools for students and parents.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Trudy Trudeau, Education Manager, runs the VW program. Raised in the Ojai Valley, she earned her B.S. in Biology while building a career in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation, with a later focus on connecting youth to the preservation of our environment. Amy Davis, Education Coordinator & Senior Educator, has used her Biology degree to inform her work as a naturalist, educator, and guide for nearly 20 years, leading canoeing, kayaking, biking, and birding tours, and classes. VLT collaborates with several local organizations: Public schools (Title I) receive state funding for environmental education and contract with VLT to provide the Nature by Design program (different from Ventura Wild, which is fee-based); OVLC – use of their land for programs; Patagonia, Boy Scouts, and other organizations provide volunteers for land stewardship, high schools and California Lutheran University in Oxnard provide interns; Diversity Collective assists with diversity training.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Requested funds of \$10,000 would provide 50% tuition scholarship to 24-36 Ojai Valley qualified students for participation in a Ventura Wild program in 2024. Programs run once weekly for 2-4 hours for 8-10 weeks. Group size is 8-12 with a 4:1 kids-to-adult ratio. Transportation is not provided but Ojai programs are usually a 5 to 10-minute drive within the Valley. Loaner gear is available to anyone who needs it.

■ HEALTH

Oaks Restorative Ranch

Program: Rescue Wendy

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oaks Restorative Ranch pairs horse rehabilitation with mental health services for children, youth, and adults. We offer sessions that help people work through past, present struggles, and help them develop life skills like trust, communication, and boundaries. We focus on three things: healing for the individual, showing up for the equine, and supporting the community. We are currently mobile and want to create a more permanent space for both horses and humans to heal together, a place where they can build bonds that will carry them through their journey of healing and growth. Oaks Restorative Ranch is requesting a grant of \$15,000 for the project “Rescue Wendy” so we can bring home our first rescue horse and begin to rent a space in the Ojai Valley where we can sustainably provide sessions to the community. Sessions are always free to allow access to mental care services for people who would not usually be able to afford them. Life is a journey, but you do not have to walk it alone.

COMMUNITY NEED

It is twofold: Increasing depression and anxiety, especially in youth and young adult; horses are in the same predicament. Rescues have many horses, others sit in their pens, day after day. Wendy came to Ojai’s Humane Society 2008. She and her foal Sandy have been adopted and returned multiple times. With Oaks Restorative Ranch, Wendy and Sandy will meet people who have lived the same life, and together they can process and heal.

POPULATION SERVED

Children, Teens, and Adults from the Ojai Valley and surrounding areas at no charge.

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

Goals: (1) To secure a “home base” location for Wendy, Sandy, and sessions, (2) To serve at least 160 clients annually, assisting them to manage and cope with their emotions/trauma and, (3) To provide an opportunity for psychology and social work interns to receive clinical hours towards their licensure. Implementation: There are four programs: Child (Kid), Teen/Adult, Group, and Workshops. The Kids sessions are structured games where the child “helps the horse learn how to play.” Teen and Adult programs follow a scripted 10-month curriculum, pairing an individual with a horse. Workshops are offered so that a group can participate and work on a particular topic together. The goals for the horses are (1) to help them get adopted, or (2) to help them achieve better mental health in their current homes. Evaluation: Teens and adults have written evaluations which provide the status of their current mental health. These are given at the end of the program, to measure the program’s effect on the participants. There is an evaluation process as well for the horses.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Oaks Restorative Ranch founder Kali Brooks, has a bachelor’s degree in psychology and over 12 years of experience working with horses. They seek connections with schools and organizations providing services to at-risk youth and adults.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

The grant request to Ojai Women’s Fund of \$15,000 is to pay for boarding, care, and feeding of Wendy and Sandy in a permanent location.

■ Health

OjaiCARES

Program: Patient Navigation/Survivorship

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OjaiCARES provides services and support, at no cost, to people in the Ojai Valley touched by cancer: individuals with new diagnoses, those receiving treatment, survivors, family, and caregivers. Prior to 2013, individuals dealing with cancer in the Ojai Valley had to drive to Ventura, Santa Barbara or further to receive such support. OjaiCARES is the only community-based, comprehensive cancer resource center, serving over 1300 individuals and providing 16,000 individual services at no cost since its inception in 2013, averaging twelve services per person. All services are non-medical and include: patient navigation, patient advocacy, peer counseling, support groups, oncology massage, reiki, guided imagery, and transportation. Patient Navigation is the largest and most important program OjaiCARES provides. This grant will allow OjaiCARES to continue this service, helping people receive timely and appropriate medical care and psycho-social support to help reduce the stress of living with cancer.

COMMUNITY NEED

Patient Navigation is the largest and most important program. No matter where a patient is in their cancer journey, the first step is to become more informed and feel more empowered. Having skills to negotiate and communicate one's needs are critical. OjaiCARES aims to provide these.

POPULATION SERVED

OjaiCARES supports cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and family. Clients range in age from 18 to 90 years old, are 80% female, 20% male, have different cancer types, and are in various stages of progression.

PROJECT DESIGN & EVALUATION

Goals: Patient Navigation program is to help people receive timely and appropriate medical care as well as psycho-social support. Implementation: (1) Patient Navigation, advocacy, and integrative therapies (2) six support groups, including: grief support and caregiver's support group, two cancer-specific support groups, and Circle of Life - an open forum to discuss living, aging and end-of-life issues for all persons, (35) Guided meditation, yoga, reiki, aromatherapy, and oncology massage, (46) a boutique with wigs, hats, and scarves, and (57) a robust, vetted, referral list. OjaiCARES connects with the Latino community through their two bi-lingual Promotoras – Community Health Care Workers. They conduct informative sessions for women to (1) raise awareness about the need for early detection of breast and cervical cancers and (2) to inform them about available state funded free services. Evaluation: Every client interaction and service is evaluated and analyzed, to assess service use and what can be added or eliminated to better serve their clients.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

The Executive Director, Susan Kapadia, is the certified Patient Navigator and Advocate. Tiffany Moises assists the Director. There are four professional support facilitators, 2 Promotoras and three volunteers. They partner with HELP of Ojai and Livingston Hospice to offer support groups, UCLA/Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity and the Department of Health in Santa Barbara to support the Promotora program.

EXPENDITURE OF GRANT FUNDS

The Patient Navigation Program budget is \$62,836.00; the \$15,000 grant will be used to help pay the salary/wages portion for this program.

■ SOCIAL SERVICES

HELP of Ojai

Program: Housing Assistance Fund

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

HELP of Ojai is seeking support for the Community Assistance Program's (CAP) Housing Assistance Fund (HAF) Inclement Weather Program. This program assists housing insecure and unhoused residents of the Ojai Valley in need of temporary shelter due to inclement weather conditions, health issues and/or domestic violence. The goal of this project is to prevent the community's most vulnerable residents (those over the age of 65, medically fragile, parent(s) with minor children, those fleeing a violent partnership) from living in substandard, and often unsafe, housing situations. The HAF allows HELP of Ojai case managers to place qualified clients in a hotel room temporarily during inclement weather such as severe rain, wind or low temperatures in the winter, and high temperatures in the summer. This program will provide a secure and safe housing solution for unsheltered and housing insecure clients during a time when their mental and physical health is most at risk.

COMMUNITY NEED:

The Ojai Valley is experiencing a housing crisis. The need for affordable housing is significantly greater than the supply. Many individuals and families that lose their housing are unable to find a unit once housing is lost. This is a direct link to a person becoming homeless. Rent is rising and people on a low/fixed income cannot afford to pay their rent. This leads to older and/or disabled persons living on the street, in their cars or in uninhabitable structures. For those who choose to work with a HELP of Ojai case manager, the wait time to secure permanent supportive housing is at least six months, with most homes taking anywhere from 12-18 months to secure.

POPULATION SERVED:

The Housing Assistance Fund serves housing insecure and unsheltered Ojai Valley residents. A person is defined as housing insecure when their rent is more than 50% of their income, they live in substandard housing that would be deemed as unlivable if inspected by authorities, there are too many people living in the home, when two or more families live in a home, and when a person is transient and must move every few months due to the cost of living. Unsheltered, or literally homeless individuals have no place to live. Based on the current client profile, it is estimated that 35 individuals will be supported by this program, with 50% over the age of 65, 30% under the age of 18 (minor children) and 20% between the ages of 18- 60. It is predicted that 70% of the recipients will identify as women. 100% of the people supported meet the federal guidelines of low or extremely low income. 40% of the population identifies as Hispanic/Latino.

PROJECT DESIGN & EVALUATION:

The goal of this program is to protect the health of vulnerable individuals by providing temporary shelter during inclement weather, health issues and/or when fleeing a domestic violence situation. In this proposal, the temporary shelter will be a hotel room (preferable local) from 1 to 14 nights. Our goal is to provide 50 'unique' nights in a hotel. All participants will meet with CAP staff to determine eligibility. Those needing temporary shelter will be contacted within 48 hours of when inclement weather is expected. The medically vulnerable who need a space to recuperate post operation and/or illness and those fleeing a domestic violence situation who require emergency shelter are eligible. Program success will be measured by the total number of hotel stays provided. Case managers will utilize Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to track client services, housing plans, and outcomes. The data will be evaluated quarterly to ensure the goal will be met. If needed, staff will complete outreach to prospective and current clients to ensure they are aware of the service.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

This program will be led by the Community Assistance Program staff, which is comprised of two, full time staff members including the Director of Homeless Services and the Senior Outreach Case Manager. The team currently supports 30 unsheltered clients. This funding will allow them to provide another intervention to protect the health and wellbeing of our clients. Case managers work with clients to support long-term housing plans.

EXPENDITURE OF GRANT FUNDS:

The \$15,000 requested will go towards hotel rentals. Some hotels give discounted rates when there is space available. None of the funds are used for administrative costs.

■ SOCIAL SERVICES

Nate's Place, A Wellness and Recovery Center

Program: General Operating Support

Request: \$15,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of Nate's Place, A Wellness and Recovery Center is to serve teens and young adults (ages 13-25) in Ojai Valley and Ventura County, who are at risk of substance abuse and/or mental health disorders or are striving to attain and maintain sobriety and mental health in a safe, healthy manner. The programs include Healthy Replacement Activities, Peer Recovery Coaching, group therapy sessions and additional targeted bilingual programs. In February 2023 they opened a clubhouse-like center in a large, airy space at Oxnard Harbor to help teens and young adults live a stable, clean and sober life. Nate's Place was founded in memory of Nate Rhoades, who grew up in Ojai, and sadly passed away after a traffic collision. Nate's Place is a tribute to Nate's passion-filled life and honors the recovery model that he bravely accomplished in his early teenage years.

COMMUNITY NEED

Substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health conditions are increasing in Ventura County and are at twice the statewide average for young people in two categories. Nate's Place is the only non-profit center in the county offering young people the professional services cited above at a low cost or no charge at all for most participants (who are on MediCal). The Ventura County Behavioral Health Outpatient Alcohol & Drug Program already sends clients to them.

POPULATION SERVED

Nate's Place is committed to supporting at-risk teens and young adults and to increasing accessibility for underserved and marginalized communities. A monthly open house is held for prospective participants and their parents. Participants in first 4 months: 27 from Oxnard, 6 from Ojai (via their van, provided at no cost). Several activities in their Summer Outdoors Program are in Ojai (rock climbing, hiking, and swimming in a river). From July 2023 to June 2024, Nate's Place expects to serve 50-70 Ojai Valley residents via referrals from Nordhoff and Legacy, plus more via their in-school program (see below).

PROGRAM GOALS & EVALUATION

A major program goal for 2023-2024 is to increase Ojai's access to the services offered by Nate's Place. This fall they will provide a Drug Prevention Program at Nordhoff and at Legacy including Teen Intervene groups, Parent Education Talks and Youth Education Talks. Additional goals for the coming year: 1) to complete their MediCal and Drug MediCal credentialing process, and 2) to be financially able to 2a) hire and train additional peer support recovery coaches and activity specialists and 2b) increase peer coach engagement hours from 8-10 to 15-20 hours weekly. Evaluation methods include a 1-to-1.5-hour-long biopsychosocial Intake Assessment (history, current situation and risks, substance use and symptoms) which sets the length of treatment time. Participant progress is evaluated through a Participant's Program Chart, weekly staff meetings, bimonthly participant surveys and Quarterly Outcome Staff Check-ins.

KEY STAFF AND COLLABORATION

Co-Founder, Co-Director, and Program Coordinator, Heidi Allison Rhoades, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) with 22 years of experience with teens and adults with mental health disorders. The Co-Founder, President and Co-Director, and Manager of Facilities is Larry Rhoades. In addition, there are 6 Peer Support Recovery Coaches, 7 Activity Specialists and 25 Volunteer Task Force members providing support services (many are Ojai residents). Key Collaborators are VC Behavioral Health; Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.; Oxnard Union High School's Peer Wellness Centers; Nordhoff; Legacy; VC Medical Center Addiction Clinic (in process). The co-founders/co-directors are Nate's parents. They work at the center more than the 5 days a week it is open and take no salary. They pay the contracted employees (3 are bilingual) a living wage.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

\$11,000 for contracted professional fees (coaches and activity specialists); \$3,000 for transportation (gas, ins., repairs for their van); \$1,000 for supplies.