**Achievers Center for Education**

**Letter of Inquiry**

**The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation**

**Project Title:** To support the General Operations of the Organization

**Amount of Funding Requested**: $20,000

**Brief Statement of the Organizations Purpose and History**: In January of 2003, several women with children who had special needs began to discuss and pray about starting a school for their children. This vision found fertile soil in which to grow, and Achievers Center for Education found its campus home on the grounds of University United Methodist Church that same year. The mission of Achievers Center for Education (ACE) is to educate a diverse group of students, grades 5th-12th, who are functioning two or more grade levels below age appropriate, in a safe, nurturing environment where attention is given to social, intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral and emotional development. Instruction begins at current academic level and continues in their best mode of learning. Students are grouped by academic abilities, not age or grade level. We believe every student deserves the chance to shine!

We anticipate an ultimate enrollment of 15 students for the 2017-2018 school year, which will begin August 2017. We will add additional students to our school population as we are able. We receive many inquiries regarding our educational program, however, finances are a barrier for many families. Full tuition at ACE is $975 mo/10 months or $9,750.00 per academic year, with the total cost of educating one of our students at $15,000.00 per academic school year (compared to an average cost of $20,000.00 per special education student/per academic year in the public school system). *To put it simply, our tuition charges per student are not sufficient to cover the cost of educating that student,* ***and often the parents are unable to pay the entire tuition****. This leaves ACE with a substantial portion of our operating budget that we seek funding for on an ongoing basis.*

**Project Description**: ACE provides a positive environment for those learning challenged students to reach their potential. We offer a low student to teacher ratio of five (5) students to one (1) teacher. Our teaching strategies, including classroom learning, on-line learning and physical exercise have proven to be very effective for students with special needs, including ADHD, autism, dyslexia, cerebral palsy, Tourette Syndrome, Down Syndrome, those with significant anxiety or depressive disorders, significant learning disabilities, and mild to moderate cognitive challenges. We also accept ALE (life-skills) and BMC (behavioral management) public school students who are academically and socially appropriate for ACE, as well as abused, neglected and bullied children. Our dedicated staff is the heart of our school-we currently have three (3) full-time staff positions and six (6) part-time staff positions.

Based in San Antonio, Texas, according to our research ACE is the only accredited regional private school recognized by the Texas Education Agency that specializes in serving students functioning two or more grade levels below age appropriate. We carry full accreditation through AdvancED (one of the world’s largest US-based accreditation agencies) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). AdvancED accreditation is accepted nationally and recognized by US Department of Education. This means that credits earned at Achievers may transfer to any public school system.ACE received the highest accreditation score that the evaluator had ever seen given to any school or university in our region by AdvancEd in December 2015.We feel the score reflects our commitment to excellence, as does our Guidestar Silver designation-achieved in the Fall of 2016.

**Brief Statement of Any Previous Funding Received from The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation**: Our computer lab is called the “Harvey Najim Computer Lab”. The foundation provided full funding and equipment for the lab when we first opened our school in 2003. Amount is unknown. We received $15,000 from the Foundation for the 2016-2017 school year. With this generous funding we were able to add a part-time teacher to our staff, and purchase curriculum materials. We hope to be able to place her as full-time for 2017-2018, pending available funding.

**How the Proposed Project Relates to The Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation’s Funding Priorities**: One of the stated funding priorities of the Foundation is providing children’s education. Our program fits the goal by providing educational opportunities to children who are underserved in their current educational situation, and who are looking for an exceptional educational opportunity in order to develop to their maximum potential.

**Line-Item Budget for Project in Which Funds Are Being Requested**:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Line Item description | Total Project Funds Allocation | Najim requested funds allocation |
| Salaries | 160,000 | 15,000 |
| Payroll Taxes | 10,000 |  |
| Curriculum/Books/Field Trips/Office Supplies | 11,500 | 5,000 |
| Accreditation/Continuing Ed | 1,225 |  |
| IT/Copier | 3,000 |  |
| Insurance/Facility/Tax Prep/Website-Advertising/Misc. | 13,000 |  |
| **Total** | **198,725** | **20,000** |

**Children impacted**:   
           The total project initiative will impact 15 unduplicated children.  
           NFF requested funds will impact 15 unduplicated children (general op request)

**Organization Total Revenue and Expenses for Current Fiscal Year**:

Budgeted Revenue: $201,500 Budgeted Expenses: $198,725

**Project Timeline**: Our program coincides with the school year, mid-August thru early June. Our fiscal year is August 1-July 30.

**Brief Project Evaluation Criteria**: We believe it is our responsibility to equip our students to make a positive impact in the world and to live out our motto, "Every student deserves the opportunity to shine." The students will be prepared for the rigors of life beyond school through instruction that is appropriate and beneficial, and guidance into the possibility of independent learning and living. Character, leadership, and teamwork skills will be strengthened through rich student activities; athletics, fine arts activities, community service, on-site job experiences, and field trips. Students will be given the opportunity to have a strong work ethic and high moral standard, as well as, be equipped academically and emotionally to begin changing their world.

Woodcock Johnson III is used as a tool at Achievers to determine growth in academics and areas of stagnation or regression.  The test is administered to new students in the fall and to all students in the month of May each year.  Individual tests focus on math, reading, reading comprehension, math, and science.  Tests are selected for each child’s based on their abilities – not their expected age or grade level.  Scores can be reflected as “age” and “grade level” as a comparison to a traditional testing environment.  Parents are given copies of the scores with a typed summary from the Guidance Counselor/Test Administrator.  Teachers use the information gleaned from the tests as a tool for making their curriculum more appropriate for each student when feasible.

Additionally, through constant contact with parents, other staff, observation of individuals, quarterly Progress Reports guide the faculty with determining level of progress with each student. Job Coach Evaluations/Rubrics reflect job/social skills in a real-world environment. While results with this student population are hard to measure in a quantitative manner, our goal always is to see positive forward progress for our students at regular intervals.

**List Other Project Funders**:

McCreless Foundation $1,200 (committed) Tye Foundation $10,000 (pending)

Klesse Family Foundation $15,000.00 (committed) DEW Foundation $5,000 (pending)

Anonymous Donor $6,750 (committed) Carl C. Anderson Fdtn $10,000 (pending)

Valero Foundation $10,000.00 (committed) AKR Foundation $5,000 (pending)

Phyllis Schoener Fdtn $4,000.00 (committed) Dixie Starnes Wenger Fdtn$5,000 (pending)

Texas Cavaliers $10,000 (asked for $10,000-committed but amount unknown until 4/2018)

Greehey Family Foundation $10,000 (committed)

**Contact Information of Primary and Secondary Person Within Organization**:

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