

## Summary Recommendations from the Life's Plan Inc. Grants Committee

Life's Plan Inc. would like to share some examples for this year's applicants of past Micro-Enterprise business models awarded grant funding. We have provided grants to dozens of individuals with disabilities and mental health issues over the past 20 years. I hope this summary list can provide some fresh new ideas, inspiration and insight into what the Life's Plan Inc. Grants Committee is looking for in funding a new startup or established micro enterprise business for a person with a disability. Here are some of those recommendations awarded in the past from the Life's Plan Inc. Grants Committee:

### **Creative Designs**

Creative Designs started in 2016 and offers handmade, custom jewelry creations using new and repurposed materials. Over 300 bracelets and necklaces are currently available.

Target Customer: Primarily Female Pricing: Necklaces \$10-\$12; Bracelets \$5-\$7

New items for 2019 include earrings and the addition of optional charms for the bracelets and include more options for the male population. Brooke's designs are currently available through home shows and vendor/trade shows. They will be available on line (Facebook store – targeting December 2018) and email marketing. Brooke was approached by a Plainfield retailer (Makery Studios opening in November 2018) to have a display of her jewelry for sale. The retailer will offer the space at no charge and will commission 15% of the sales

### **Autism Solutions**

Urban Autism Solutions, a non-profit that serves individuals with disabilities on the autism spectrum, requested funds for a micro business called "Laundry Land" on behalf of Mr. Dawson and Mr. Jones. The grant funds will pay largely for job coaching services, some startup costs and some marketing materials for distribution for a small laundry service operation located in the basement of the Autism Solutions building in Chicago's "Little Italy" neighborhood.

### ***EGG Abilities***

Our proposal for ***EGG Abilities*** is much more than a nice idea. We have already begun with four chickens and a small coop. ***EGG Abilities*** has the basic beginnings, and the operation currently to produce enough eggs for a CILA group home of four individuals. It is their desire to expand sufficiently, so that ***EGG Abilities*** will provide an individual with Autism with an authentic, meaningful work experience. This project has moved away from being a hobby and has developed this into an actual micro-business allowing a person with Special Needs the ability and opportunity to become more economically independent. This would include a wide variety of appropriate, necessary tasks: feeding and caring for chickens, collecting and packaging eggs, recording and delivering orders, talking to customers, creating and tending the garden, cleaning the chicken coop and nest boxes, maintaining the compost for the garden, mowing the lawn, making necessary repairs, ordering supplies, maintaining a client list, and recycling. All these tasks can be accomplished with adult supervision and support. This work is beautiful in its simplicity. It is not trendy. It does not depend on anything highly technical. It has the added bonus of providing nutritious, farm-fresh eggs for our supportive customers. The ***EGG Abilities micro-business*** would be self-sustaining and any monetary surplus, which exists after expenses are paid to earmark for an individual with disabilities for evening and weekend activities and school-related funds. The grants committee found this proposal to be exceptional, well thought out, researched, and gave Egg Abilities micro business the necessary funding to continue their expansion.

### **Shannon Brothers Landscaping**

Two brothers who were supported by a non-profit organization here in Illinois were desirous of providing lawn and snow removal services for the Association and as well in their local community. While living at home with his family, one of the brothers started a lawn and snow removal service in Elmhurst, Illinois in 1979. The other brother began his landscaping service in Lombard, Illinois nearly 20 years ago. Now they wanted to work together with their 55 years of experience in the landscaping business. Some of their clients have included J&R Cycles, a 7-11 store and a liquor store all in Lombard. Other clients were residential. Many of their clients re-hired them yearly until they moved into a Villa Park Apartment and had to suspend operations. In December 2015, a non-profit association hired the Terry and Steve to provide snow removal services at one of their locations in Lombard, IL. During the next growing season, both brothers began providing lawn-mowing services at the same location. They became very dependable and provided a high quality service to the community. Both brothers were self-starters and do not require any supervision to get the work done. Both brothers had worked in the community before with competitive employment, e.g. Burger King. But both brothers were more interested in submitting a grant application to Life's Plan Inc. for the Micro-Enterprise grant funds to start their own landscaping and snow removal micro-business. The brother sought funds for two lawn movers and two snow blowers along with a trailer with hitch to a bike to pull the lawn mowing and snow blowing equipment in each season in their community to provide their business services. Shannon Brothers Landscaping was granted full funding by the Life's Plan grants committee.

### **We Can Wrap**

An Individual with Special Needs from Palos Park, who had severe and profound disabilities liked to create hand-painted craft and wrapping paper, including gift bags to be sold at local arts and craft fairs as well as on various websites, that focus on hand-made and American-made products. The tentative name of the subsequent business will be "We can Wrap."

The proposed business plan was to create potential business partnerships with other local artists, disabled and typically abled, producing handmade craft items that include but are not limited to: food, pottery, and painting. These relationships will potentially reduce the operating and support costs associated with selling products directly to consumers at art and craft venues and via internet sales, including but not limited to: transportation, set-up, displays and support staff.

Currently this individual works with other exceptional artists in her home under the direction of an art major and future art therapist. This individual is supported by her family, her personal support workers, and volunteers. The Community of Exceptional Artists meets two times per month to create original works of art. During this time, this individual would work to improve her artistry skills and works to select her preferred medium and style. We Can Wrap was granted full funding by the Life's Plan grants committee.

### **Windy City Plates**

Windy City Plates is made up of three individuals with developmental disabilities that attend a Day Training Program with UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago. The principal agents of the company include: a 57 year old, African American person with Cerebral Palsy and developmental disabilities. He uses a wheelchair and a communication device to assist in communication when he cannot be understood. A woman who is a 55 years old, Hispanic female with Cerebral Palsy, mental illness and developmental disabilities. She uses a wheelchair and an iPad as a communication device. And an older gentlemen who was 74 years old at the time of the grant application, an African American person with Cerebral Palsy and developmental disabilities. He uses a wheelchair and a communication device as well.

Although their disabilities were significant, so was their desire for self-determination and the ability to provide a quality product to consumers, while simultaneously educating people about our abilities rather than our disabilities.

Windy City Plates photographs images of the city of Chicago and obtains the rights to use photographs from a local photographer. They edit these photographs using Photoshop Elements; print them onto specialty paper using sublimation ink and then heat press the photographs onto treated mugs, plates, ornaments and coaster sets. They received the supports on this endeavor from UCP-Seguin and received full funding form the Life's Plan Inc. Grants Committee.

### **Pub for Pups**

Pub Pups, LLC is a social enterprise crafting dog treats with reclaimed grain from local breweries. They have business partners with several local Brewing Companies in the western suburbs of Chicago, IL. The group receives the spent grain at no charge from these brewers. An individual with Special Needs and her mom make treats in their kitchen under a license by the IL Department of Agriculture and applied to the State of Michigan as well in which they sell dog treats at local breweries, a local bakery, disability conferences and local craft fairs. They applied for grant funding to expand their online sales to breweries throughout Illinois and Michigan through their website.

### **Yikes!**

YIKES! is a Full Line Operator (FLO) of Coca-Cola Beverages set up for an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities named Matthew. The local bottling company partners provide, install and service vending machines. As a FLO operator, YIKES! receives free weekly delivery of ordered beverages to this individual's stock inventory. YIKES! Partners with Community Alternatives Unlimited by placing a vending machine at their RTA Training site and with North Suburban Special Education with placement of a vending machine in their teacher's lounge. The collaborating with Total Link2 Community as consultant and advisor, and with the individual's friends and family who support and helped create YIKES!, which enabled them to launch this soda –vending micro-business. Assisted by a job coach, Matthew was doing real work of real value in his community. YIKES! stocks and restocks vending machines and refrigerators with Coca-Cola Brand and other beverages distributed by them for businesses and organizations across Chicago and the northern suburbs. Matthew/Yike's! was granted full funding by the Life's Plan Inc. grants committee to add 4 more vending machines to their business model!

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Nixon  
Executive Director  
Life's Plan Inc.