

Truist Foundation Grant 2020

Organization Information

Organization Name: Mending Arrow Ranch

Phone: 423-305-5586

Mailing Address: 627 Red Clay Rd. SW, Cleveland, TN, 37311

Organization's Web Address: www.mendingarrowranch.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MendingArrowRanch/>

Instagram: @mendingarrowranch

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mending-arrow-ranch/>

Organization Background & Leadership

Background of Organization

Mending Arrow Ranch is an equine ministry that connects a horse and a child to achieve the goals of mending and redeeming hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. The goal of the Ranch is to provide our students with the tools to rise above their circumstances and enrich their health and quality of life. More than a therapeutic riding center, Mending Arrow Ranch seeks to provide a safe environment for each student. Each session provides a one-on-one connection between the child, the horse, and the mentor – and through the support of volunteers, donations, and grants – is provided FREE of charge.

Key Leadership of Organization

Kayla Davis, CEO/Founder

Heather Dobbs, Executive Director

What percentage of your Board contributes financially to the organization annually?

100%

List of Board Members

See attached

Organization Financials

Annual Budget: \$78,354

What is the size of your organization relative to budget?

Small (less than \$1 million)

Current Annual Operating Budget

See attached

Describe any special circumstances that have impacted your budget this year

Most of our fundraisers are on site at Mending Arrow Ranch and community events. Due to COVID-19 we are very limited in the fundraising aspects. Community events and even grants that we were applying for have been postponed or cancelled due to the latest health crisis.

Grant Request Information

Grant Request Title

Reading Warriors – a literacy program for children (K-5th) with learning difficulties that uses a multi-sensory approach to help them overcome the challenges of reading

Request Amount: \$6,811

Purpose of Grant Request (Statement of Need)

In 2016, Mending Arrow Ranch opened its gates and heart to the children within our community. Located at the southern end of Bradley County, Mending Arrow's fence borders the Tennessee/Georgia state line. This gives us an advantage to not only reach out to our local county, but also to surrounding counties and those willing to travel. Mending Arrow Ranch is an equine ministry that aims to connect a horse and child to achieve the goals of mending and redeeming hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. Our programs strive to improve child development, through equine and animal therapeutic tactics. Reading Warriors, our newest addition, provides a unique opportunity for children, parents, and teachers to receive specialized support for literacy in our community.

The Reading Warriors program, which was designed by a local educator and tutor who utilizes the Orton-Gillingham approach, aims to provide a unique opportunity for children who struggle with learning to read by including our ranch animals in each experience. We have already seen how the equine programs at Mending Arrow Ranch can benefit children with special needs. Research suggests that students who struggle with reading are at higher risk of poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, we intend to encourage students who struggle with reading to develop self-confidence and independence that will carry over into academic endeavors, while simultaneously bridging the reading gap. It is our belief that our newest program will not only

promote a relaxed and positive atmosphere, but also help meet the emotional needs of students we serve.

The Reading Warriors program assists children by offering positive reading experiences, prescriptive support for learning, and outreach within the community. Once a month, families can attend Reading Day at the Ranch to spend time reading to horses and ponies. Parents and students who need more support with reading skills can meet with our tutor weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly for consultations, one-on-one sessions, or parents' workshops. Tutoring sessions are tailored to each child's needs and includes time with animals at the Ranch. Incorporating animal work into reading sessions not only creates a natural reward but fosters a sense of pride and responsibility for each student. The outreach division of Reading Warriors, nicknamed the Reading Corral, travels to off-site events such as community festivals, fairs, and schools with various animals from the Ranch. The outreach division will encourage our program to reach a greater number of children in surrounding communities in Tennessee and Georgia.

All services at Mending Arrow Ranch are offered free of charge. With that being said, we are requesting the Truist Foundation for \$6,810.59. This amount will fund three of our Pony Warriors' care, teaching materials, and furniture items for weekly sessions and summer camps. It is our aspiration that the Reading Warriors program will have a positive impact on children across the Tennessee Valley by providing positive experiences, meaningful support, and outreach within our community.

Estimated number of lives impacted by this project/program: 150

Anticipated Impact of Grant Request

The Reading Warriors program at Mending Arrow Ranch was designed to reach the approximately 20% of the population that struggles to learn to read. Based upon principles of the Orton-Gillingham Approach to reading instruction and coupled with the therapeutic benefits of interaction with equines, participants of this program will be impacted in two ways. First and foremost, the approximately 25 children who enroll in the Reading Warriors program spring and fall semesters will receive one-on-one instruction and assessment by a certified teacher who is trained in effective reading remediation practices. These children will be given an informal assessment of literacy skills and offered prescriptive tutoring sessions that will target their individual needs. Support and instruction will be given to not only the child, but also to the parent/caregiver. It is not uncommon for low income families to have limited access to literature in the home, and adults in these settings may struggle with reading, themselves. Providing this training free of charge will help families continue to engage in effective literacy activities in the home to strengthen and accelerate the participant's progress toward individualized goals.

Participants who enroll in the Reading Warriors program will also engage in hands-on literacy activities centered around a pony during each tutoring session. The relationship with the pony serves to promote confidence, impulse-control, and alleviate the stress and anxiety that often plagues children with reading struggles. By integrating the pony into the literacy activities, we can not only meet each child's academic needs but their emotional needs, as well.

The second way the Reading Warriors program impacts children in our communities is through an outreach component. With the goal of promoting literacy awareness and bolstering support for young readers of all abilities, the Reading Warriors outreach team travels to elementary schools to provide educational opportunities with animals from the ranch. Children and staff are able to interact with the animals while engaging in literacy based activities. This creates a positive and meaningful encounter that is centered around reading- something that many children may not otherwise experience.

Populations Served by This Grant

Geographical Area Served: Cleveland, TN

Community that that will be impacted with this grant: Truist Foundation - Eastern Tennessee

Will this grant predominantly (more than 51%) serve low- to moderate-income (LMI) individuals and families? Yes

Please provide an explanation as well as the specific percentage of LMI individuals and families served

70% of the families Mending Arrow Ranch serves are low income or have a large health cost for their children. 25% of our students are overseen by the Department of Children's Services, and 55% of our students are diagnosed with special needs/physical delays.

Evaluating the Success of Your Project or Program

Project/Program Success

The success of the Reading Warriors program will be measured in a number of ways. Upon enrollment in the program, participants will be given a basic assessment of literacy skills, along with a social-emotional assessment, and ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) questionnaire. Based on the results of these surveys, individualized SMART goals will be created for each participant. Progress will be monitored periodically during each ten week session, and again at the close of each ten week period. This data will be analyzed, and individual consultations will be conducted with each family to recognize academic and social-emotional growth at the close of each session period. Regarding our outreach component, we will collect surveys from teachers at the close of our visits in order to gauge the effectiveness, interest level, and relevancy of the outreach activity to determine evidence of positive change.

Project/Program Timeline

The Reading Warriors program at Mending Arrow Ranch is an ongoing program that is offered to children in the community, free of charge. Reading Warriors officially launched in Spring of 2020, however, current events involving COVID-19 forced a temporary closure of the ranch. It is our goal to re-open as soon as safely possible. Upon completion of the fall 2020 semester in November, we hope to have assessment data to show an improvement in fundamental reading skills and attitudes from at least 80% of our participants.

Sustainability

As with most nonprofits, the sustainability of our programs is an ongoing task. At Mending Arrow Ranch, equine care is the most expensive cost to the overall annual budget. The same is true with the Reading Warriors program. Most of the equipment and materials needed for the reading program are reusable, and thus, a one-time purchase. Consumable teaching materials, such as index cards and writing utensils, can be easily purchased on an as-needed basis. Currently, Mending Arrow Ranch is able to support six horses and five ponies through the provision of grants, donations, and equine sponsorships. Since opening in 2016, Mending Arrow has successfully relied on fundraising efforts, grants, and monetary donations to not only sustain its programs, but to grow and expand services to reach more children, as well. It is our belief that with faith and hard work, we can continue to succeed in offering life changing experiences to children in need.

Major Commitments

The major commitment for the Reading Warriors program is with Kayla Davis and Anna Parker, reading specialist/Orton-Gillingham Tutor.

Mrs. Anna Parker has two children enrolled in programs at Mending Arrow Ranch and has also stepped up as a member of the Board of Directors in 2019. She has a Master's in Early Childhood Education and is a teacher and dyslexia advocate. Through her own daughter's experience with dyslexia, she has seen firsthand how struggling to read affects a child emotionally and mentally.

Kayla Davis, Mending Arrow Ranch's CEO/Founder, has also made a large commitment to the Reading Warriors program. As a child, she dealt with dyslexia throughout her education, however, she was not diagnosed until college. Knowing what these children struggle with on a day-to-day basis is not for the weak of heart. Looking back, Kayla feels empowered by what most see as a weakness and uses her experience with dyslexia to encourage children to embrace their strengths while improving on weakness.

Through volunteers, interns, staff, and very enthusiastic ponies we have the passion and resources to help close the literacy gap in our community. The Reading Warriors program will have a positive impact not only on the students we serve, but on those they will encounter in the future. To touch one life is to touch many.