

## **The Ability Center (Open Gym) Summary Report**

### **Information about the Applicant**

Founded in 2008, the mission of The Ability Center (TAC) is to provide people impacted by disabilities with a daily opportunity to be fit, active, healthy, and to play. Our vision is to build communities where all abilities are provided a universal opportunity for health, wellness and recreation. Our main goal is to provide a higher quality of life for people of all abilities by transforming greater Milwaukee into the most universally inclusive recreation destination in the world. In 2021, The Ability Center programs impacted more than 5,000 students through its Adaptive Scholastic Athletic Program (ASAP) and 500 program participants through Open Gym and other adaptive opportunities. In fact, The Ability Center has experienced a 50% increase in events when comparing the last two quarters in 2021 to the first two quarters of 2022.

### **Statement of Need**

The Ability Center is seeking a grant in the amount of \$5,000.00 to support the Open Gym program. the goal of the adaptive Open Gym Program is to provide opportunities for children and adults of all abilities to play together in an inclusive, non-competitive, friendly environment with their friends, family, peers, and colleagues. As one father stated, "I get to play with my kid. No words on how that feels." In the first six months of 2022, The Ability Center has coordinated 14 Open Gym programs for 411 participants. The intent of the program is to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities to be active and to decrease the struggle to be fit by making 'access accessible' and providing recreational opportunities in various neighborhoods. Therefore, The Ability Center is focused on expanding Open Gym partners throughout the community.

### **Project Goals and Expected Benefits**

The goals of our Open Gym program include:

- Introduce adaptive sports to the community in an inclusive, non-competitive, friendly environment.
- Provide a welcoming, comfortable and inclusive environment for people with disabilities to play together with their family and friends.
- Create a fun-filled evening of activities and games for friends, families, peers and/or colleagues .

Participating in athletic activities has multiple benefits for youth and adults. Being active and staying fit has short-term and long-term benefits, including improved physical health, teaching discipline and dedication, improved mental health, leadership and following directions, building friendships, and general skills that translate into school or work environments.

### **Project Implementation Plan**

Open Gym is an ongoing program of The Ability Center. Over the last few years, Founder and Executive Director Damian Buchman has been primarily responsible for identifying and solidifying community partnerships and scheduling the Open Gym events. Recently, an Adaptive Program Manager has been hired to take over these responsibilities and continue the growth trajectory of adaptive programming. In addition to expanding existing twice-monthly Open Gym events at the Wauwatosa Recreation Department, Rite Hite YMCA and the Jewish Community Center, Open Gym has been asked to host events at Pius XI and United Community Center. In addition, The Ability Center is developing partnerships with nonprofits and community organizations in the City of Milwaukee which will provide access and opportunity for more low-to-moderate income and minority youth, adults and families to

participate in adaptive sports. These additional locations are anticipated to start hosting Open Gym events in Fall 2023.

### **Evaluation Plan**

The Ability Center relies on direct feedback from program participants as a main component of our evaluation process. The greatest testament to success is having a participant return for another Open Gym event and bringing along friends or family. In fact, at a recent Open Gym program, a mother indicated she brought her three boys and a neighbor based on the rave reviews from one of our regular participants. Another parent shared, “my kids love Open Gym so much that they chose to skip vacation to attend!” In addition, The Ability Center uses sign-in sheets to track the number of new and returning participants. In addition, these sheets capture names, dates of birth, email addresses, and ask the individual to indicate if they have a disability or not. Another way The Ability Center measures the success of the Open Gym program is when adults transition from Open Gym to playing in the 3-on-3 wheelchair basketball league or with the Wisconsin Thunder Wheelchair Basketball team.

### **Budget**

The below budget reflects hard costs and personnel costs associated with the Open Gym Program. While Damian Buchman’s, along with the Adaptive Program Manager, attend all events, Damian’s time is not reflected here, nor are general overhead costs associated with The Ability Center – rent, internet, HR, accounting, etc. That said, Bader Philanthropies and Soref Charitable Trust both contribute to TAC’s general programming, with a portion of each of their grants dedicated to Open Gym. PNC Bank Foundation is the lead sponsor of Open Gym.

Open Gym Project Budget	
<b>REVENUE</b>	
Bader Philanthropies	\$10,000
Soref Charitable Trust	\$5,000
PNC Bank Foundation	\$20,000
WisPact	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Adaptive Program Manager (50% of salary)	\$20,000
Community Program Manager (10% of salary)	\$5,000
Trailer/Truck Maintenance Fees	\$1500
New Chairs	\$10,000
Chairs (repair)	\$1,500
Athletic Equipment	\$1000
Mileage	\$1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>

#### Staff Recommendation

The grant application can be approved. The \$5,000.00 can be applied toward the \$10,000.00 cost of the new chairs that will directly benefit the disabled participants in the ASAP program. The cost is allowable under the initiatives of the foundation.