

SAMPLE GRANT APPLICATION Optimist Club Grant Request

Organization Background

Mission Statement:

To empower healing through art and community.

Brief History:

We Care Arts (WCA), founded in 1983 and incorporated in Dayton in 1990, is a nonprofit organization

empowering individuals through art and community. Based in Kettering, Ohio, WCA serves individuals with mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance use diagnoses, with 80% of participants living below 250% of the federal poverty level. In 2004, WCA moved into a fully accessible facility, expanding capacity and creating partnerships with local organizations to increase reach by over 35%. Between 2014 and 2019, WCA earned certifications from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF), the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS), and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), demonstrating professional operation and strong organizational policies. Currently, WCA serves over 3,000 individuals annually across six counties. WCA offers hybrid in-person and virtual programming, fostering creativity, confidence, and inclusiveness to empower individuals of all abilities throughout the Greater Miami Valley.

Project Name: Transition to Work (TTW)

Project Goals:

TTW empowers high school students with special needs (ages 16–22) by enhancing life and job skills through therapeutic art classes. The program supplements state-mandated TTW curricula with weekly lessons on:

- Time management
- Teamwork
- Following directions
- Goal-setting
- Sequencing and project management

Lessons include mindfulness activities aligned with Ohio Department of Education Fine Arts benchmarks. In the 2025/2026 school year, 450 art kits representing 4,500 lessons and instructional videos support hands-on learning and accommodate diverse abilities. TTW aims to increase student confidence, foster accomplishment, and develop practical skills essential for employment and independent living.





Project Description:

WCA seeks funding to expand and sustain TTW, which integrates weekly art classes into special education classrooms at no cost to the schools. TTW prepares students for adulthood by blending creative art skills with practical skill development, including time management, task completion, and collaboration. All supplies are provided through individualized art kits and teacher resource bags, supplemented with online video tutorials to facilitate participation in-person or virtually. In 2024/2025, the program distributed 400 kits per semester, completing over 3,800 projects. In 2025/2026, WCA is projected to distribute 450 kits per semester.

As one educator noted, "This program brings joy to my students' lives. Their lives are full of trauma, but these projects offer them an

opportunity to forget their traumas and create."

TTW addresses a critical need: many special education teachers are not trained in art, and art teachers often lack training for students with special needs. Grant funding will allow WCA to expand lesson plans, develop digital resources, and sustain program materials to meet increasing demand, improving students' fine motor skills, self-confidence, and emotional well-being. Sample TTW Videos: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN7I9M n1zr0Md9g5cUyZEGfnndZ-oNeF&si=V-6Tt9F6DeOejWCf

"I LOVED THIS SESSION!!! We have been participating for a couple of years, but this was by far my class's favorite set of TTW kits! We were able to do so many extra projects with the clay kit, and the kids loved all the things they made," shared another teacher, highlighting the engagement and enjoyment students experience.

Need in the Community:

Dayton and surrounding counties lack programs that support high school students with disabilities as they transition to adulthood. In Ohio, students with disabilities face significant challenges in this transition. According to the Ohio Department of Education, the dropout rate for students with disabilities was 19% in 2022, ranking the state 36th out of 61 states and territories. These statistics highlight the urgent need for programs that equip students with the skills necessary for successful adulthood.

The Transition to Work (TTW) program addresses this gap by providing free, art-based classes that reinforce employment and life skills. Developed with guidance from experts in special education, WCA's curriculum leverages art's cognitive and emotional benefits while teaching practical skills, helping students build confidence, independence, and workplace readiness.



Donation Request Reason:

We Care Arts requests funding from [Optimist Club Name] to support a semester of TTW programming. Funds will provide art kits, teacher resources, and curriculum development, helping students build life and job skills while fostering independence, confidence, and community engagement.

Funding enables WCA to reach more students, expand program offerings, and provide life-transforming art experiences that prepare young people for adulthood and employment.

"Many of our students don't have the opportunity to go out to art class at the high school level. Having the videos from art instructors is meaningful to them," commented one staff member, demonstrating the program's unique value in supporting students who otherwise have limited access to creative instruction.

How Funds Will Be Used:

- Creation of individualized art kits and educator resources
- Curriculum development and instructional video updates
- · Weekly art programming for students in-person and virtually
- General materials to deliver a no-cost, high-quality program

Target Audience:

High school students ages 16–22 in special education classrooms across six counties.

Number of Individuals Impacted:

Over 450 kits annually, across Dayton-area school districts including Dayton, Beavercreek, Kettering, Huber Heights, Springfield, and local charter schools.

Timeline:

TTW aligns with the academic calendar, providing 450 art kits each semester (900 annually), along with lesson plans and instructional videos to ensure consistent, uninterrupted engagement.

Success Measurement:

WCA conducts annual surveys of participants and partner schools. Goals for the 2025–26 school year include:

- Increase schools served by 10%
- 2. Achieve over a 33% survey return rate
- 3. Ensure 90% of survey responses rate the program as "Meets Expectations" or higher.

By cultivating partnerships, seeking new funding, and delivering measurable program outcomes, WCA ensures long-term sustainability and continued community impact.

