

Erin DiCesare - Erin DiCesare

ID	Status	Created	Submitted	Login
171	submitted	7/14/22 07:04AM	7/29/22 12:06PM	6869_edicesare@marycariola.org

Organization Profile

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Mission/Vision Mission: We are the regional leader in preschool, interdisciplinary, evidence based, education and life skill solution that inspire and empower individuals and the families of those with complex disabilities.

Vision: We set the standard in innovations that unlock lifelong potential for people with complex disabilities.

Receive County Funds? YES - Our preschool program is reimbursed through Monroe County. While children are identified through the Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE), through each individual school district, the home county (Monroe) reimburses for Preschool. As of this date we have 77 children enrolled in preschool who are Monroe County residents. Monroe county resident are typically 80% of our Preschool Program enrollment.

Div. of Corp. N/A? yes

Proposal Information

Project Name Cariola Workforce Development Program Supporting Careers in the Education and Support of Individuals with Complex Disabilities

Summary The Cariola Workforce Development Program will help Monroe County develop and sustain a diverse and inclusive workforce to support individuals with complex disabilities. Key components of this program include: (1) removing barriers to educational and employment opportunities in the field of disabilities for Monroe County residents, including housing and food insecurities, daycare, technology, and transportation, (2) supporting equitable and inclusive professional growth opportunities resulting in job advancement and increased income for underserved communities, and (3) creating a replicable model for building organizational capacity to support a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce supporting individuals with complex disabilities at Mary Cariola Center.

Workforce/Economic?	Health/Safety?	Infrastructure/Sustainability?
yes	no	no

Description The proposed project will advance the goal of Workforce Development and Economic Recovery by expanding a program built on strong community partnerships aimed at removing barriers to employment and education, providing professional growth opportunities and designing a replicable organizational model to support the diverse, equitable and inclusive growth of a skilled workforce within Monroe County to support individuals with complex disabilities.

In order to advance the goal of Workforce Development and Economic Recovery the proposed project has three components. The first component focuses on removing barriers to employment and education within the field of disabilities for Mary Cariola employees and Monroe County residents. Through the Career Development Academy, those interested in work within the field of disabilities will have the opportunity to participate in sessions focused on: (1) helping them better know their values, interests, strengths and growth opportunities, (2) connecting them with a life coach to help remove barriers to growth including support with daycare, transportation, housing, food access, technology and debt counseling, and (3) exploring pathways to multiple careers within the field of disabilities including teaching assistants, special education teachers, nursing, behavior analysis, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. By co-locating this workforce development program at Mary Cariola, we have the distinct ability to show these "careers in action" and more quickly develop a skilled workforce to meet the unique needs of individuals with complex disabilities. Partnerships with RTS and The Shore Foundation will help remove transportation and technology barriers that exist within underserved communities.

The second component of this project is to provide professional growth pathways to those interested in pursuing a career in the field of disabilities. The first pathway, the Pre-Professional Scholars Program, will be available to all Monroe County residents and Mary Cariola employees and will provide a cost-free pathway to a NYS Teacher Assistant Certification. This pathway will include all required trainings and coursework for the NYS Teacher Assistant Certification along with tutoring to support those taking the NYS Teacher Assistant certification exam and coaching and mentorship opportunities to develop leadership skills within the field of disabilities provided by leaders at Mary Cariola.

Additional pathways that are currently available to Mary Cariola employees and funded through other sources include the Early

Professional Scholars Program providing pathways to Special Education Teacher Certification or degrees within clinical fields including nursing, speech, behavior analysis, social work, occupational therapy and physical therapy, and the Emerging Leader Scholars Program providing pathways to School Administration Certification or other advanced certifications to support work in the field of disabilities. These programs would remain available to Mary Cariola employees and would continue to be supported through other funding sources.

The last component of this project is to enhance organizational capacity at Mary Cariola Center to support the diverse, equitable and inclusive growth of all employees. Utilizing consultation from Tangible Development, an expert in DEI consultation, the organization will develop a replicable model of professional growth with a focus on DEI. This model can be used by other organizations within Monroe County to continue the work of growing a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce to support individuals with disabilities.

Mary Cariola has demonstrated a history of successful engagement of donor support for the educational advancement and development of our staff. We have a strong foundation upon which to expand this program, however it will be impossible to expand this work throughout Monroe County without ARPA funding. We intend that this project will be sustainable and will have significant growth and success that will further engage donors in the ongoing success of this program. We will also engage our state funders and legislators to ensure optimal allocation of education and staff development costs in our reimbursement structures.

Our project will increase accessibility and remove barriers in our plan for community outreach and engagement via the Career Development Academy to a broad array of community partnerships. One of the primary focuses of the project is to engage people who have been marginalized and have not had ready access or even hope of advancing their education and achievement on a "career trajectory".

We have a strong base of success with this project and can highlight those who have made achievements to advertise and share their successes to engage new participants.

The goal of this project is to remove barriers for those in underserved and underrepresented communities within Monroe County to increase the skilled workforce to provide services to individuals with disabilities. Measurable outcomes include:

% of participants who become employed within the field of disabilities

% of participants who advance in their organizations as a result of obtaining the NYS Teacher Assistant Certification

of people who engage with a Life Coach

of people who attend Career Development Academy

of people who participate in the Pre-Professional Scholars program

% of participants who receive their NYS Teacher Assistant Certification

of people who participate in DEI learning opportunities

% of underrepresented employees who advance to higher positions at Mary Cariola following consultation with Tangible Development

Non- Measurable metrics will focus on general feedback surveys following attendance in the Career Development Academy, assessing the value of exposure to serving people with disabilities. Since the intention of these sessions is general exploration and engagement of Monroe County residents, assessment of the broader interest and feedback is important for a first engagement.

The impact of this project will continue beyond 2026, as we will have supported the expansion of the workforce through individual skill and educational credentialing. We know from our current work and success with the scholars educated at Mary Cariola that the direct impact on people with disabilities is significant. We also know from our scholars who have gone on to other agencies and public school districts, they take with them these credentials and skills to influence new programs and enhance the scope of understanding in public school districts. Their passion for serving the disabilities community has spread and will continue to do so exponentially through the support of ARPA funding through this program.

Company Strengths Mary Cariola Center was established in 1949 and has long been recognized for standard-setting innovation and leadership in discovering, implementing, and designing educational programs that unlock lifelong potential for children and youth with multiple complex disabilities. This innovation carries over into our residences with ground-breaking services.

Our "pioneering" efforts:

1. Developing an interdisciplinary team approach for teachers, residential staff, and clinical staff to work together to design, develop, and monitor programs to best meet the needs of every child.
2. Designing and constructing creative communication systems and electro-mechanical devices to enable each child to communicate.
3. Incorporating medical services, such as a physician, podiatrist, and eye appointments onsite during the student's school day.
4. Onsite Dental visits and implementation of a school-wide Oral Health Program.
5. Developing a customized curriculum that meets individual education plan (IEP) goals as well as New York State Department of Education standards.
6. Applying the principles of sensory integration with handling and positioning techniques to meet the needs of children with multiple disabilities.
7. Developing environmental adaptations as alternatives to restrictive behavior management programs.
8. Designing and constructing high equality customized therapeutic seating and positioning equipment for classroom and home use.
9. Integrating into our program specialized activities that help children learn: pet therapy, dance therapy, student prom, use of the most current computerized augmentative communications systems, and dynamic behavioral approaches.
10. Evaluating the use of assistive technology in the classroom, and enhancing the use and deployment of iPads/touch-screen technologies for Occupational Therapy, Communication, and Educational applications.
11. Applied Behavior Analysis that focuses on how learning takes place using positive reinforcement techniques.
12. Opened the first group residence outside New York City in 1979 for children with severe developmental and physical disabilities. Also opened the first residence in NYS for children with severe behavioral challenges.

Community Resources Partnerships:

For Career Development Academy & Life Coach:

- High school counselors in RCSD and Charter schools
- REOC
- Rochester Works'
- Career Start (MWBE)
- Veterans Outreach Center
- BOCES
- E3 Rochester Charter School
- RTS
- The Shore Foundation
- Layer 3 Technologies (MBE)
- McAllister Sign, Inc (WBE)

For Scholars program:

- Monroe Community College
- Roberts Wesleyan College

For Organizational DEI Capacity:

- Tangible Development (MWBE)

We have had many years of successful collaboration with the identified Community Partners. Specifically, we have been engaged with REOC, and Rochester Works for recruitment; have engaged more recently the Charter schools with graduating seniors to share our program of support while attending college. Additionally, we have previously engaged Career Start in placement of staff with us.

The relationship with local colleges has been strong over the past 10 years. Prior to that, we have supported interns from Nazareth, Roberts Wesleyan, Monroe Community College and BOCES in student placements for internship and learning at Mary Cariola. Most recently we received an award as the "First Corporate Partner" with Roberts Wesleyan. We have had great success with all of these institutions in supporting staff to advance their credentials and college degrees.

As shared above, we have had success securing donor support and state funding for some of this project. Specifically, we have secured NYS funding to support staff pursuing their NYS Special Education Teaching Certification along with donor funding to support other clinical degrees within the field of disabilities. We intend to continue to explore those options and believe donor support will continue, especially with greater exposure and success through ARPA funding.

Audience The target population for enrollment in this program is underserved communities, underemployed/unemployed Monroe County residents and youth who have not had the opportunity to explore careers in this field. To reach these targeted populations, we will utilize our strong relationships with CareerStart, REOC, Veterans Outreach Center, Rochester Works, Monroe Community College, Rochester area charter schools, Rochester City School District and other local high schools to advertise and recruit for this opportunity.

Associated costs of participating are intended to be covered by the grant. Through our experience, we have found that to ensure success, participants have to feel supported and engage in the “possibilities” of their future. Therefore, exploring and removing the barriers to success leads to the best outcomes.

<i>Cost 1st Year</i>	<i>Cost All Years</i>	<i>Residents 1st Year</i>	<i>Residents All Years</i>	<i>FT Employees</i>	<i>PT Employees</i>
\$523,945.00	\$2,022,230.00	700	1,500	2	1
Volunteers					
0					

Staffing Dr. Erin DiCesare is the Director of Learning & Organizational Development at Mary Cariola Center. She has her PhD in Organizational Leadership and is also a licensed and board certified behavior analyst. Dr. DiCesare has been with Mary Cariola Center for 15 years and has extensive experience both supporting the development of employees at Cariola as well as providing direct care support to individuals with complex disabilities. Additionally, Dr. DiCesare has provided community trainings and conference presentations.

A Community Educator and Life Coach will be hired to support this project. The Community Educator will have a degree in special education, human services or a related field and will have experience working with individuals with complex disabilities and providing training to individuals working in the field. The Life Coach will have a degree in social work or a related field and will demonstrate knowledge in the resources available to residents in Monroe County to help them access the necessary supports to remove barriers to employment and education. The Life Coach will have access to flexible funds through this grant to provide financial support to individuals in emergency situations (e.g., need for rent, electricity, or transportation payment). Mary Cariola Center has experience distributing similar funds through a program titled Project Uplift sponsored by ESL and United Way. Flexible funds allow the Life Coach to best meet the needs of the individuals depending on their unique situation and will be distributed directly to the vendor (e.g., landlord, RG&E, RTS).