

**CIRCLE HEALTH BALL FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES
2016 COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES GRANT
APPLICATION FORM**

Please include the Application Form as the Cover Page. Complete all of the following information.

Project Title: Circle Health Speaker Series: Healthy Choices Save Lives

Name of Contact Person: Dr. Margaret McDevitt

Full Legal Name of Organization/Group: Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School

Alternate Name(s) of Organization/Group: _____

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Amount of Funding Requested: \$ 9700

NOTE: If your organization has a fiscal agent/conduit other than the applicant named above, please complete the following information.

Name of Fiscal Contact Person: Gina Spaziani

Name of Fiscal Agent/Conduit: Middlesex Community College

Address: 33 Kearney Square

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NARRATIVE

1. Brief overview organization's mission, history of the organization, and details of your organizational structure. Describe who you are, why you exist, and what you do. Describe your history to date, including the age of your organization and key accomplishments or areas of significant work in the community. Describe your size, structure, and who is involved with the organization in no more than one page.

The Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS) is a public high school that targets at-risk adolescents who have officially dropped out of high school or who are seriously at risk of doing so. In 1989, Middlesex Community College (MCC) and Lowell Public Schools began a partnership to provide academic instruction, social support, and work readiness skills for youth who had dropped out of the public schools. In 1995, this partnership was formalized when MCC received a charter from the MA Department of Education to form Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School. LMACS fulfills its mission, "to enable all students to achieve academic, social, and career success. This supportive school community identifies, encourages, and develops interests and abilities while acknowledging and respecting each student's personal and cultural identity." During the 2014-15 school year, LMACS enrolled a total of 146 students; approximately 52% of students were white, 6% Asian, 31% Latino, and 3% Black/African-American, and 72% low-income. Approximately 10% of LMACS students are parents and 45% are involved with the courts.

The curriculum of LMACS includes traditional academics addressing all aspects of the MA State Frameworks as well as life skills classes, health education, daily advising, and a 50-hour internship for graduating seniors. LMACS provides a Life Choices course as part of the curriculum that includes talking about healthy relationships, substance abuse and other life choices. LMACS has three full-time Licensed Social Workers on site to counsel students on mental health-related issues. LMACS also offers dual enrollment at MCC, and LMACS assists all graduating seniors with college applications and the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA).

LMACS has numerous collaborations in the community to serve its at-risk youth student population. The Assistant Director, Nancy Arseneaux, LICSW, participates in the monthly System of Care (SOC) meetings with other providers in and around the City of Lowell. The school nurse and health teacher, Amy Hendl, RN, serves on the Lowell Teen Pregnancy Prevention Task Force. LMACS runs an in-school clinic in partnership with the Lowell Community Health Center to provide confidential counseling and health-related services. LMACS participates in the TJX, Inc. Youth Business Institute (YBI), a program that offers workshops on job success skills and offers postsecondary scholarships. Additionally, MCC and UMass Lowell students work with LMACS students as tutors. LMACS staff meet regularly with representatives from Lowell Police Department, Juvenile Court, Department of Social Services, Department of Youth Services, Lowell Community Health Center and United Teen Equality Center. LMACS also has a relationships with LGH outreach programs such as self-defense classes, teen prenatal classes and smoking cessation/education, The Center for Hope and Healing, and Megan's House, a residential program for young women providing alcohol and substance abuse treatment. LMACS also engages speakers on topics such as anti-bullying, violence reduction, healthy behaviors, and substance abuse prevention.

LMACS staff includes an Executive Director, Assistant Director, 13 teachers, three Social Workers, a Nurse/Health Educator, and a Career Counselor. A twelve-member Board of Trustees governs LMACS. Board members include an alumni representative, a parent representative, a current student, local business people and community and college leaders. The school maintains a ratio of 12 students per teacher. LMACS has a Parent Advisory Committee.

In 2000, LMACS was among six charter schools across the nation featured in a television documentary titled Charter Schools That Work (PBS 2000). In 2000, Mass Insight Education named LMACS a "Vanguard School" and The Foundation for Partnerships awarded LMACS' principal its prestigious Edgerly School Leadership Award for academic improvement. In 2013, LMACS was one of five organizations awarded the Leadership in Suicide Prevention Award from the MA Coalition for Suicide Prevention, Northeast Region. In 2010, science teacher Melissa Chen was awarded "2010 Cubist Pharmaceuticals' Science Education Leadership Award." Since its inception, LMACS has enrolled over 1,500 youth and awarded high school diplomas to over 400 students.

2. Brief overview: a statement of the community need based on available data, the target population, estimated number of people that will be impacted, overall purpose, how this project will increase or improve services in the Greater Lowell area, specific barriers your project may address, and expected outcomes in no more than one page.

Over the past ten years opioid overdoses have increased significantly in Massachusetts.¹ The October 2015 report by the MA Department of Public Health, *Data Brief: Fatal Opioid-related Overdoses among Massachusetts Residents* calls out the alarming and escalating public health crisis: “The estimated rate of unintentional opioid-related overdose deaths, which includes deaths related to heroin, reached levels in 2014 previously unseen in Massachusetts. The estimated rate of 18.6 deaths per 100,000 residents for 2014 is the highest ever for unintentional opioid overdoses and represents a 251% increase from the rate of 5.3 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2000.”² An October 14, 2015 article in *The Lowell Sun* indicated that the City of Lowell recorded 42 fatal opioid overdoses from the period January 2015 through mid-October 2015, approximately one a week.³

The students served at LMACS, most of whom are Lowell residents, are especially at-risk for substance abuse. In a brief titled, *Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents (in Brief)*, the National Institute on Drug Abuse lists five risk factors that influence drug abuse.⁴ These are: early aggressive behavior, lack of parental supervision, substance abuse, drug availability, and poverty. LMACS students are especially vulnerable given that approximately 40% have been involved in the court system, over 70% live in poverty, and lack of parental supervision is a common challenge for the youth served by LMACS. Through discussions with the students and analysis of individual records, staff have confirmed the following challenges in students’ lives: gang involvement, substance abuse, family problems and mental health disorders.

In October 2015, Lowell Health Department conducted a survey⁵ of LMACS students on substance abuse and use by family, friends, and the students themselves; 72 responded. Of the LMACS students, 69% indicated they had abused one or more substances in the past thirty days: 63% indicated they had abused marijuana in the past 30 days, 42% indicated they had abused alcohol, 11% indicated they had abused a prescription that isn’t their own, and 7% indicated they had abused a pain medication prescription not their own. The students were also asked about use in their environments—and focused on use by friends and family. Sadly, 70% of students indicated that members of their families had abused marijuana in the past 30 days, 24% indicated family members had abused prescriptions not their own, 22% indicated family members had abused heroin, 17% indicated family members had abused cocaine, 21% indicated family members had abused pain medication not their own. Friends’ abuse of drugs is also significant, with 88% indicating friends had used marijuana in the past 30 days, 28% indicating friends had abused prescriptions not their own, 22% indicating friends had abused pain medications not prescribed, and 15% indicated friends had used heroin. The need to drive home to LMACS students the harms of substance abuse and give them tools to promote self-resilience cannot be overstated.

The team developing this proposal, which included the Director, Assistant Director/Social Worker, Nurse, and Social Worker, considered the ways in which they could most effectively impact LMACS students. Staff actively participate in in-service training on and off-site related to substance abuse; substance abuse and healthy decision-making are in the Life Choices curriculum; LMACS social workers provide one-on-one counseling to students; and LMACS actively collaborates in the system of care and refers students to services. The staff believe that the message to which the students relate the most is from those who have had similar life experiences and have been individually impacted deeply by substance abuse. Therefore, through this project, LMACS teachers and staff aim to provide a compelling speaker series and follow up reflection sessions to drive home to students in a striking, memorable, and relatable way the risks of substance abuse, offer tangible strategies and inspiration to effectively deal with peer, and in many cases, family pressure to abuse, and connect to resources that are available to help.

¹ <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/substance-abuse/prevention/opioid-overdose-prevention.html>

² <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/quality/drugcontrol/county-level-pmp/data-brief-oct-2015-overdose-county.pdf>

³ http://lowellsun.com/breakingnews/ci_28966154/data-lowell-opioid-crisis-has-grown-more-grim.

⁴ <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-abuse-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/what-are-risk-factors>

⁵ Bonn, Mim; Lowell Health Department, 2015

3. Outline specific project goals and objectives and include a timeline for each of them. Identify your goals by number. Please note that objectives must be measurable. Suggested format for objectives: SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-framed).

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Goal | To drive home to all LMACS students the risks of alcohol and substance abuse including opioid abuse. |
| Objectives: | Provide all-student (mandatory) speaker series that includes seven educational speaker workshops and follow up reflection students to all LMACS students (~90 youth). |
| Time Period | Measurable Activities, Accomplishments to be completed |
| February 2016 | -Confirm dates of three speakers for spring -Reserve venue (anticipated to be MCC Federal Building) -Develop pre-and post-evaluation for students -Develop materials for facilitated small group discussion during advising sessions to follow speakers |
| March 2016 | -Speaker 1: Kathi Sullivan from Drive To Save Lives. After a night of binge drinking and poor choices at a series of underage parties, Kathi's 17-year old daughter Taylor wandered away alone in the woods, and drowned in only two feet of water. They found her 3 days later. Kathi shares Taylor's story with students and parents in hopes that her message would enlighten others on the dangers of underage drinking and poor choices. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. |
| April 2016 | -Speaker 2: Ginger Katz, c-founded of The Courage To Speak Foundation. Ms. Katz's son, Ian, died from a drug overdose in 1996 when he was in college. She combines her personal story of a family shattered by drugs with the latest information and statistics on substance abuse and prevention. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. |
| May 2016 | -Speaker 3: John Morello, I Am Dirt. Morello began abusing drugs at age 12, his way of dealing with a brother's death at the hands of a drunk driver. While Morello was trying to turn his young life around, his older brother was sinking deeper into a heroin addiction, eventually dying of an overdose in 2003. Morello now lives a successful life and is a father. He presents a highly engaging one-man show. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. |
| June/July 2016 | -Confirm dates and reserve venue for fall speakers -Review results from June 2016 substance abuse survey of LMACS students; compare to Oct. 2015 survey. |
| September 2016 | -Speaker 4: Melissa Weiksnar, mother of Amy Caruso and author of <i>Heroin's Puppet</i> . Melissa's daughter was a junior in the nursing program at Boston College and seemed to have everything going for her. But in November 2009, she admitted she was a heroin addict and voluntarily entered treatment. Five weeks later, just shy of her twenty-first birthday, she died from an overdose. Melissa Weiksnar wrote <i>Heroin's Puppet</i> so parents, educators, clinicians, and young people can learn from her daughter's six-year battle with substances and speaks about her daughter's addiction and death from heroin. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. |
| October 2016 | -Speaker 5: Clif Crosby, Caron Foundation. Cliff Crosby, a former NFL player who now works for the Caron Foundation, a non-profit alcohol and drug addiction treatment center. He shared his childhood experiences growing up with a heroin- and crack-addicted mother and offers a motivational story of resiliency in the face of family drug abuse. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. -Review results from September 2016 substance abuse survey of LMACS students. |
| November 2016 | Speaker 6: Chris Herren, The Herren Project. Herren is an American former professional basketball player who played in the NBA. He descended into drug abuse and had numerous felony convictions and eventually entered recovery. In 2011, ESPN aired a documentary, <i>Unguarded</i> , based upon Herren's basketball career and drug related issues. Herren now travels the U.S. sharing his story about his drug abuse and how he is overcoming it. All LMACS students (a minimum of 80) attend and participate in a one hour follow up small group reflection exercise. |
| December 2016 | -Speaker 7: EMT from Trinity EMS. This workshop will focus on the frequency of emergency calls for overdoses, what an overdose looks like, and dangers of opioids. |
| January 2017 | -Review results from January substance abuse survey of LMACS students/compare to June 2016 -Compile evaluation results from students -Compile final report |

4. Describe the evaluation process you will use to determine whether the project meets the stated goals and objectives.

For each session, all students will complete an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the speakers and offer opportunity for students to reflect on their messages. Students will be asked to respond to questions related to content knowledge and will have an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. After the workshops, students will participate in small group discussions facilitated reflection guided by teachers and staff social workers. The Lowell Health Department Survey was administered in October 2015. LMACS will administer a substance abuse survey to students in June 2016, September 2016, and January 2017 to compare student responses related to substance abuse and perception of risk to themselves. It is hoped that the survey will reveal a decline in abuse among students comparing October 2015 to June 2016 data, and comparing September 2016 to January 2017 data.

5. Provide a brief plan for how you intend to sustain this work beyond current funding. Programs that fund staff time without demonstration of how services will continue beyond the duration of this grant period will not be favored.

LMACS has modest funding to provide speakers, and also engages volunteers from the community. In 2014-15, LMACS received Shannon Grant funding in collaboration with the Lowell Police Department for guest speakers on topics including anti-bullying, domestic violence, and substance abuse prevention. LMACS will continue to work to identify funding for such programs. Two of the speakers, Melissa Weiksnar and Trinity EMS, will offer these workshops at no charge. LMACS will continue to seek out in-kind speakers and seek reduced fees, where possible. LMACS staff are highly qualified to deal with risk factors in students' lives and regularly take part in in-service trainings. The powerful stories that students hear through the speaker series will add another dimension to staff's ongoing work with students and can be integrated into group and individual counseling to support students understanding and insight into these issues.

6. Provide an itemized budget for the total amount of funding you are requesting. Include a total budget for this project, as well as any additional matching/contributing funds and in-kind services. No funds may be used for general administrative or overhead costs.

| Speaker | Cost |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Kathy Sullivan from Drive To Save Lives | \$1000 |
| 2. Ginger Katz, The Courage To Speak Foundation | \$2300 |
| 3. John Morello, I Am Dirt | \$2400 |
| 4. Melissa Weiksnar | \$0 |
| 5. Cliff Crosby, Caron Foundation | \$1000 |
| 6. Chris Herren, The Herren Project | \$3000 |
| 7. Trinity EMS | \$0 |
| Total Request | \$9700 |

MCC will dedicate space and LMACS will dedicate staffing to the project in-kind. Melissa Weiksnar and Trinity EMS will provide workshops in-kind.

Attachments:

- Updated list of LMACS Board of Directors
- W-9 with tax-exempt ID. LMACS is a public charter school per M.G.L Ch. 89 and deemed to be a component unit of the state, and as such is tax-exempt.
- Audited financial statement (LMACS does not file a 990 as it is a public school).