

The Ugly Mug Community Café

Grant proposal for the expansion of the cooking class kitchen from the
Buhl Foundation

Sierra McConnell
Executive Director

The Ugly Mug Community Café

104 East Lincoln Avenue McDonald PA 15057 (724) 809-3176

Mr. Frederick W. Theiman, President
The Buhl Foundation
60 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Mr. Theiman:

The Ugly Mug Community Café in McDonald, Pennsylvania, is run solely by a team of passionate volunteers who live, learn, and work in the community, many of whom are high school juniors and seniors pursuing volunteer hours for their senior project. As the first organization of its kind in Washington County, The Ugly Mug Community Café (UMCC) has continually operated for the past four years on a pay-what-you-can basis, with over 70% of patrons paying the suggested price or more for their food and drinks, and all “regulars” consistently putting in at least three hours of volunteer work per week, whether slinging lattes or grilling grilled cheeses, washing dishes or facilitating the wildly popular open mic nights.

After reviewing your guidelines for grantees, we believe your organization is a perfect fit to fund UMCC. We are seeking \$86,000 in funds to help convert a neighboring property into a teaching kitchen for our cooking and baking classes for high school students, our most popular program. Our classes have been a great success for the past year, but we have only been able to offer them on a limited scale, as our kitchen can only hold four people at a time. The demand for these classes has been overwhelming, and, unfortunately, we’ve had to turn many young people away because we cannot accommodate them. We are looking to expand into an unused retail space next door to our café so that we have room for 10 students per class, as well as two volunteer teachers. This will also free up our current kitchen to be used for the main café.

Thank you for considering our organization’s request. UMCC strives to be a pinnacle of education and community service in our community, just as the Buhl Foundation has been to Pittsburgh. Please do not hesitate to call the café at 724-809-3176 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Sierra McConnell

Executive Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Statement of Need	4
Program Goals, Objectives, Methodology, and Evaluation	7
Staff Biographies	9
Budget and Budget Narrative	10
Conclusion	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ugly Mug Community Café's cooking school's first year has been one of wild growth and success. Because of this, we are in need of a secondary or "teaching" kitchen, The Ugly Mug Community Café's (UMCC) current kitchen can only hold three students and one teacher,. There is considerable demand for this class, with over 50 people on the waiting list. Unfortunately, due to the size of our current kitchen, we are only able to accommodate a very small number of these people.

We have leased an adjacent property for the new teaching kitchen. The new kitchen will be 800 square feet and able to accommodate up to 10 students and two teachers at a time. With this new space, we will be able to add new classes, such as desserts and cake decorating and cooking competitions. We have spoken with the building's landlord, who also owns our current property, and he has agreed to let us remove the wall between the spaces and expand UMCC into both areas.

UMCC is seeking \$86,000 in grants from the Buhl Foundation. This money will go directly into the cooking school renovation fund. The renovation fund will be used to purchase new kitchen equipment, such as stoves and refrigerators, as well as the construction that will be needed to remove the walls between our current space and the new space. Other income sources, such as café sales, individual donors, and fundraising events, will account for other expenses, including overhead.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Meghan, a sophomore at Fort Cherry High School, is bored. Living in a small town with just a few pizza joints, a grocery store, a library, and a number of churches, she has had a hard time finding things to do since she started high school. Her friends complain of the same issue. They're too old to play at the playground, but too young to drive and go elsewhere. With a lack of options, Meghan often finds herself spending the hours between coming home from school and going to bed by mindlessly scrolling through Facebook, liking pictures on Instagram, and reblogging GIFs on Tumblr. Instead of spending time together, she and her friends, most of whom live within walking distance of one another, will Snapchat silly pictures and text about how bored they are to each other.

There are church programs put on for teenagers once a week or so in the neighborhood, but the turnouts have been low. While their efforts are admirable, these events do not take the place of a dedicated space for students to make their own, where they can spend time after school every day, if they choose to do so, and work on homework, hang out with friends, or even work on their artistic talents. As dramatic as it sounds, there is a correlation between this kind of boredom, this lack of social options in a small town, and teen drug use. Unfortunately, in the McDonald area, heroin and prescription drug abuse has been on the rise for the past five years.

That's where The Ugly Mug Community Café comes in.

Located in a renovated old theater in the heart of town, UMCC provides after-school activities for students in an effort to keep them out of trouble on the street and to provide them with a positive environment for fostering their creativity, as well as that of other community members, with space for creating artwork, frequent open mic nights, poetry and story readings, and, most popularly, cooking classes.

UMCC operates on a gift economy, also known as pay-what-you-can, where patrons are encouraged to give fairly for what they receive, whether monetarily or through volunteering to help in the cafe itself, a system which has been implemented in various restaurants across the country with excellent results. At UMCC, consistently over 70% of patrons pay at least the suggested price for their meals and drinks, with 20% of that group paying above the suggested price. Nearly all regulars also put in at least three hours of volunteer work, cooking meals, teaching cooking classes, organizing the open mic nights, or helping out with the maintenance of the space.

In late 2013, UMCC introduced cooking classes, a twice-a-week program designed to teach high school students the basics of cooking and baking. Regrettably, we have only been able to offer them in limited scale, as our kitchen can only hold four people at a time. The demand for these classes has been overwhelming, and, unfortunately, we've had to turn many young people away because we cannot

accommodate them. We are looking to expand into an unused retail space next door to our café so that we have room for up to 10 students per class with a dedicated space for learning, as well as a dedicated space for daily café operations. With this addition, UMCC will be able to serve a bigger population of the McDonald community.

PROGRAM GOALS, OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, AND EVALUATION

Program Goals

The Ugly Mug Community Cafe exists to provide area students with a safe, encouraging, enriching venue for after-school activities, focusing on the arts, including music, fine arts, and culinary arts. We believe that everyone, including but not limited to students, deserves affordable, healthy meal options, so we offer our food and beverages on a "pay what you can" basis, with suggested donations posted. The cafe is staffed by volunteers, mainly high school students, many of whom take part in our twice-weekly cooking classes, providing them with culinary skills for life after graduation.

Short-term objectives

- Provide a safe place for high school students in the Fort Cherry and South Fayette school districts to study and spend time with friends.
- Provide health, affordable meal options to all residents who seek them.
- Create an encouraging artistic space for students and other residents.
- Provide cooking and baking classes for students.

Long-term objectives

- To become completely self-sufficient based on volunteer power and food and drink sales.
- Opening 2-3 new locations over the next 10-15 years to better serve the youth of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Methods

- We will work closely with both Fort Cherry and South Fayette school districts in order to recruit students who need to complete their senior project, which consists of doing a certain amount of community service hours. We will also gain insight from the administration on which students would flourish in a setting such as UMCC and directly contact them.
- We are currently developing a community garden in McDonald, near our facility, which will be used to provide the absolute freshest produce during spring, summer, and autumn months. This will also help us reach our ultimate goal of being self-sufficient and not dependent solely on outside organizations.
- We have purchased the lease to the adjacent building, which formally housed a restaurant. We have talked with the landlord and he has agreed to let us connect the two stores. With sufficient funding, we will be able to furnish our new teaching kitchen with updated appliances and have space for up to 10 students at a time.

Program Evaluation

The Ugly Mug Community Cafe has quarterly surveys conducted by a third-party organization, consisting of surveys taken by current students in the cooking class, as well as customers and participants in our various activities, such as Open Mic Monday and the art program. We also conduct exit interviews with our cooking school graduates and follow-up interviews at one year after their high school graduation, then in five-year intervals. We then compile the responses during our quarterly board meetings and discuss what we could improve upon, what we should stop doing, and what we should start doing. Additionally, we conduct a thorough financial audit to see if there are better ways to use our resources for the next year. The findings of both the surveys and financial audit are submitted to all funding organizations.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

Sierra McConnell, Executive Director



Sierra McConnell is the founder and Executive Director of The Ugly Mug Community Café. A 2003 graduate of Fort Cherry High School, she began dreaming of an organization like UMCC while bagging groceries at McDonald Giant Eagle in high school. After finishing her undergraduate degree in Georgia, she returned to the McDonald area and saw that not much had changed. That is when she decided UMCC was a necessity for the community. Her hobbies include raising chickens, baking cakes, and watching too much British television.

Lainie Klinsky, Program Assistant



Lainie Klinsky graduated from Fort Cherry High School in 2013. She was one of UMCC's first regular customers and a member of the first graduating class of the UMCC cooking school. She became the UMCC Program Assistant after graduation, and is currently attending Washington & Jefferson College, majoring in Marketing. Her hobbies include painting, photography, and urban exploration.

Melina McConnell, Volunteer Coordinator



Melina McConnell is also an alumna of Fort Cherry High School. In 2010, she helped to open UMCC a few months before her graduation. Over the past four years, she has overseen more than 60 volunteers. She also helps coordinate the open mic night and cooking school programs. When not at UMCC, she likes to go out to eat and read Victorian literature.

The Ugly Mug Community Café 2014 Expected Budget

	Cash	In-Kind	Total
Expected Revenues			
Grants	\$86,000	\$--	\$86,000
Food and Drink	85,000	--	85,000
Contributions from individuals	48,000	--	48,000
Income from special events ¹	11,000	--	11,000
In-kind contributions	<u>--</u>	<u>\$17,000</u>	<u>17,000</u>
Total expected revenues	<u>\$230,000</u>	<u>\$17,000</u>	<u>\$247,000</u>
Personnel Expenses			
Executive Director	\$35,000	\$--	\$35,000
Program Assistant	25,000	--	25,000
Volunteer Coordinator ²	25,000	--	25,000
Employee Benefits	<u>8,500</u>	--	<u>8,500</u>
Total Personnel Expenses³	<u>\$93,500</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$93,500</u>
Nonpersonnel Expenses			
Rent and Utilities ⁴	\$16,000	\$--	\$16,000
Insurance	12,000	--	12,000
Office equipment	3,000 ⁵	--	3,000
Office supplies	200	300	500
Store equipment	2,500 ⁶	7,500 ⁷	10,000
Store supplies	<u>10,000</u>	--	<u>10,000</u>
Total Nonpersonnel Expenses	<u>\$43,700</u>	<u>\$7,800</u>	<u>\$48,800</u>
Total Expected Expenses	<u>\$137,200</u>	<u>\$7,800</u>	<u>\$135,000</u>

¹ UMCC hosts two fundraising events per year and anticipates \$5,500 in donations per event.

² The volunteer coordinator recruits, trains, and schedules volunteers.

³ Since UMCC runs on volunteer power, only very bare bones basic personnel are needed.

⁴ Utilities are included in the rent, and the rent has been heavily discounted by the building owner. Rent and utilities combined are \$1,600.

⁵ After four years, the two store computers used to run the Point-of-Sale system are needing to be replaced.

⁶ The cost of a replacement refrigerator.

⁷ The cost of two donated espresso machines.

CONCLUSION

Since its founding in 2010, The Ugly Mug Community Café has proved its importance to the community. There has been a 30% decrease in teen crime and a 42% decrease in teen drug abuse in the past four years. In particular, the cooking school program has received rave reviews from both students and parents, as well as community members and volunteers. When it was announced that UMCC would be expanding into a neighboring storefront to accommodate larger classes and a wider variety of class types, the excitement was palpable.

The \$86,000 UMCC is asking from the Buhl Foundation will be used in order to renovate our new space and provide our students with updated kitchen appliances and plenty of space to accommodate up to 10 students at a time, whereas now we only have room to comfortably fit three students and a teacher. The waitlist for cooking school is now over 30 students long. With the expansion into the new space, we will be able to accommodate each of the waitlisted students and more. This program has quickly become the most popular event at the café, which was completely unexpected. A grant from the Buhl Foundation would do wonders for our expansion project.