

October 24, 2011

Dear Directors of Texas Rural Communities, Inc.:

The Odyssey After School Enrichment Program is a community based non-profit organization that provides low cost, high quality care and enrichment for the youth of Aransas County. Our mission is to strengthen and enhance the academic, physical, and psychological development of our students in a safe and nurturing environment. We provide homework help, healthy snacks, tutoring, mentoring, and a wide variety of enrichment activities to our children for three hours after school every day.

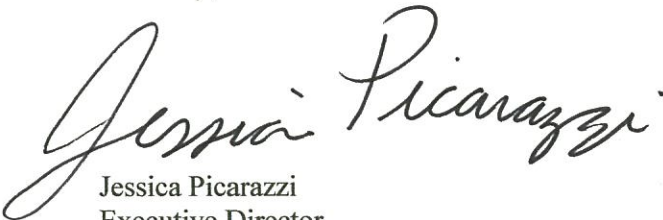
70% of the children in Aransas County have been identified as "at-risk" by the Aransas County School District. Many of the children in our program are considered at risk of developing behavior, academic, or social problems. 60% of our children's families qualify for free or reduced cost lunches and can only afford to contribute \$20 a month for their child's afterschool enrichment and academic support.

One of Odyssey's main goals is to provide these children with enrichment opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have. Our instructors strive to offer activities that will engage and inspire our children to recognize their own potential and abilities. We want our program to continue to open doors for our children, and help them discover new interests and talents.

Last year, Texas Rural Communities, Inc. generously funded the Odyssey Junior Lifeguard program. This program remedied a previously unmet need in our community by promoting healthy, active lifestyles and water safety through swimming. The program was so successful and incredibly beneficial to our students. This year, we would like to double the impact of the program by extending it to both our Odyssey sites, and allowing our younger children to be involved. Our new program will be called Staying Afloat. By extending our program, you will be providing more than 150 children with swim lessons, life saving skills, and exercise to promote healthy lifestyles.

In order to serve the children from low-income families who truly require our services, we must find funds to offer this program. Odyssey's Staying Afloat program is dependent upon securing the required financial support. We thank you for considering supporting our program and our children again.

Sincerely,


Jessica Picarazzi
Executive Director


Margaret Goolsbee
President, Board of Directors

The Odyssey After School Enrichment Program: Staying Afloat

Program Summary:

The Odyssey After School Enrichment Program is requesting an impact grant from Texas Rural Communities, Inc. to fund our Staying Afloat program. In 2010, Texas Rural Communities, Inc. generously funded the start up for Odyssey's Junior Lifeguard Program. The program was highly beneficial and successful. Staying Afloat is an expansion on our Junior Lifeguard Program of last year. Staying Afloat will still provide Junior Lifeguard training to our older students, but it will also offer swim instruction and exercise classes to our younger children.

Odyssey's current enrollment is just under 100 children. All 100 of these children will benefit from the swim program beginning as early as Spring 2012. Our older students will be given six weeks of Junior Lifeguard training, and our younger students will have the opportunity to participate in a Get Moving program in which they will participate in everything from water polo lessons to water aerobics. Every student will be able to visit the pool at least once a week to improve their physical health by swimming. We expect about half of our current students to reenroll next fall, which means they, as well as at least 50 more students will continue to enjoy the many aspects of our swim program.

We are therefore respectfully requesting Texas Rural Communities, Inc. support in the amount of \$6000. We remain the only organization in our community to offer after school care, Junior Lifeguard training, and swimming to our kids.

Section I: Contact Information

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Section II: Organizational Description

The Odyssey After School Enrichment Program, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, community-based organization, provides a safe and nurturing environment during after-school hours for 100 first through sixth grade children of Aransas County. Odyssey's intent is to provide children with a mentally and physically stimulating environment to enrich their lives after-school, so that they may be successful in school and flourish in life.

Odyssey was created to provide a safe after school environment where children receive tutoring and homework assistance, while benefiting from engaging academic and enrichment activities. Our mission is to strengthen and enhance the academic, physical, and psychological development of its students. We strive to enhance children's academic achievement, to support positive social development and relationships between children, their peers and adults, and to facilitate and strengthen the interaction between schools, families and community.

2012 marks the tenth year in which Odyssey has been serving the children and families of Aransas County. We are celebrating "A Decade of Excellence". In the past ten years over one thousand children have attended The Odyssey After School Enrichment Program, where they

have participated in activities such as, cooking classes, gardening, tennis lessons, yoga, science experiments, and engineering challenges. Nearly 60% of our students have been identified as “at-risk” and qualify for free or reduced cost lunches by the Aransas County Independent School District.

Section III: Program Description

Community Need

Currently, our school district and community are unable to offer swim instruction within their regular physical education classes, nor are there swim camps available in the summer. The cost of swim lessons is too high for many of our community’s families to afford. This leaves a large number of children unable to swim and inexperienced in the water, a startling realization given the fact that our community is located on a peninsula, and is surrounded by water on three sides.

According to KidsHealth.org, the second leading cause of death for kids under age 14 is drowning (<http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/swim.html>). By teaching our children to swim and allowing them experience in the water, we give them the opportunity to become stronger swimmers as well as learn valuable life saving techniques they can use in a water emergency.

Program Description

Our program incorporates several components. We will be continuing the Junior Lifeguard Program (started with a Texas Rural Communities, Inc. grant in 2010), as well as, adding a program for our younger students called “Get Moving”. “Get Moving” will offer our students too young to participate in Junior Lifeguard lessons in water polo and water aerobics. We will be able to provide swim instruction for our kids who can’t swim, and give every child the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the water.

The Odyssey Junior Lifeguard program is a 6 part course, for 12 students, designed to teach basic pool safety, water rescue skills and steps to take in a water emergency. Lessons are grouped into five main areas: Prevention, Swimming Skills, Response, Leadership and Rescue. The program will be offered in the spring and fall of 2012 and is taught by qualified Red Cross Water Safety Instructors. In addition to the safety instruction, regular water exercise routines are performed each session increasing strength, stroke techniques and swim skills. Increased self-respect and confidence are gained through personal progress and accomplishments. Respect for others is increased by working with other youths in a team building environment.

“Get Moving” is similar in schedule to Junior Lifeguard, but provides training for early elementary students. This program is designed for 20 students (two classes a week), and will take place over the course of 6 weeks, once in the spring and once in the fall. Classes will be taught by Red Cross certified instructors and will focus on water sports, such as water polo, and water exercises, such as water aerobics. Safety instruction and emergency preparedness will also be incorporated into these lessons.

The General Swim Instruction and Practice program is a 4 week course, for 100 students, designed to teach and reinforce basic swim skills and provide students with an opportunity to practice and utilize these skills. The general swim practice and instruction sessions will be

provided in the spring and fall of 2012. A local organization, Friends of the Pool, will continue to provide volunteer instructors to work with children who need assistance developing basic swim skills such as: floating, paddling, treading water, diving.

Odyssey's Staying Afloat Program will achieve the following goals:

1. Provide children with instruction to develop the skills to be strong, capable swimmers. This will increase our community's knowledge of water safety, reducing the risk for drowning.
2. Increase children's potential to enjoy water recreation, including swimming at our community pool and beach.
3. Promote healthy lifestyle habits by engaging children in physical activity. We aim to improve cardiovascular and physical fitness, increase strength and health, and reduce local childhood obesity and its associated risks for developing related diseases.
4. Provide children with opportunities to develop leadership skills, confidence, and respect for themselves and others.

Program Participants

Odyssey's Staying Afloat Program will benefit at least 150 Aransas County children. We hope to expand the program to benefit our younger students as well as our older kids, so that the participants will range from first through sixth grade. 60% of our Odyssey children qualify for free or reduced cost lunches and are considered at-risk of developing social, academic, behavioral, or health problems with Aransas County Independent School District. Just under 40% of our children are considered ethnic minorities.

Impact Grant

By initiating this program, we hope to bring focus to the importance of educating a community of swimmers. There are no other options for families, who cannot afford swim instruction, in our coastal community. Recently, our local school district was forced to terminate the high school swim team due to budget cuts. It is our hope that Odyssey can have an impact on reinstating the swim team by educating our children in all things water related and encouraging them to develop their aquatic talents. By giving our children a strong swimming foundation, we pave the way for future competitive swimmers, divers, aquatic athletes, and lifeguards.

The benefits our children receive from the safety instruction and emergency preparedness portion of our program will expand into their families and our community. Our newly trained Odyssey children can take their newfound knowledge of water safety and share it with their parents, siblings, and other family members.

Given the need for local swim instruction, we anticipate a high level of interest in the program. The Odyssey Swim Program lends itself to articles in local papers, school publications, the Odyssey website, and Community Pool advertising. Odyssey looks forward to sharing success stories in our bi-annual newsletter as well as our two student run newsletters.

Odyssey Program Budget:

Junior Lifeguard Program:

Program fees for 24 children (12 in spring, 12 in fall)	432.00
Instructor fees for 12 classes (6 in spring, 6 in fall)	1200.00

Get Moving Program:

Program fees for 40 children (20 in spring, 20 in fall)	720.00
Instructor fees for 24 classes (12 in spring, 12 in fall)	1080.00

General Swim Instruction and Practice Time:

Program fees for 100 children (4 spring sessions, 4 fall sessions)	2400.00
Transportation to pool (\$20 per trip)	320.00

Total: 6152.00*

*We would be honored to receive an impact grant of any size.

Outcomes

Our hope for our Staying Afloat Program is that we can give our Odyssey children the valuable life skills of an ability to swim and water safety techniques. Junior Lifeguard and Get Moving participants will have their knowledge and skills tested at the beginning and end of the programs. All Odyssey children will be given swimming pre- and posttests to assess their swimming abilities and accomplishments.

Timeline

The program will be implemented starting the spring semester of 2012 and will be continued in the fall semester of 2012. During the spring, one group of 12 older students will participate in weekly Junior Lifeguard Training sessions and two groups of 10 younger students will participate in weekly Get Moving Programs for a series of six weeks (late March – May). At the same time, larger groups of children will visit the pool for weekly General Swim Instruction and Practice. With 100 children enrolled in the program, each child will participate in the general swim practice at least 4 times.

The schedule will be repeated in the fall with new groups of students following the same Junior Lifeguard and Get Moving Programs for six weeks (September – October). Again, larger groups of children will simultaneously visit the pool for General Swim Instruction and Practice. The program will be completed and funds will be fully expended in late October 2012.