



IMPACT100 TRAVERSE CITY

2023 ENVIRONMENT, PRESERVATION & RECREATION FINALIST: GRAND TRAVERSE INDUSTRIES, INC.

INITIATIVE: FIELD OF DREAMS

OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE – IN THE APPLICANT’S WORDS

Grand Traverse Industries (GTI) provides program services and employment to individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

GTI’s “Field of Dreams “project is an outdoor recreational park designed specifically for individuals with IDD. The proposed park will have ADA accessible nature paths, benches, picnic tables, raised garden beds, sound gardens, wheelchair swing, ADA adult swings, a basketball court, water features, activity and art space, and a memorial garden.

This will be impactful because it will allow additional outdoor programming to all of GTI’s team members including those with the most significant disabilities along with other IDD community members. This project has the ability to positively improve the IDD population’s physical and mental health along with having a beautiful space to honor and remember their friends in the memorial garden. This park would be used in collaboration with other area organizations for the benefit of the IDD population.

The following sections contain certain key information from the application, as written by the applicant.

While detailed financial information has not been provided here due to its confidential nature, each applicant submitted an initiative budget and supporting financial documents as part of their application. Each proposed initiative and the supporting financial documentation has undergone a thorough financial review by our Financial Review Committee (FRC) and the initiatives proposed by our finalists have met our standards for moving forward.

ORGANIZATION’S VISION STATEMENT

GTI will be the sought-after organization in northern Michigan for enhancing the lives of those with disabilities. GTI will help all people with disabilities achieve their highest level of independence by providing dignity and opportunities through employment and services.

ORGANIZATION’S MISSION STATEMENT

GTI fiercely advocates, strengthens and advances the dignity and opportunities of people with disabilities, through services and employment.

DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION AND ITS HISTORY

Founded in 1974, Grand Traverse Industries (GTI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing job training and supported employment services, day programming, and LISN (hearing impaired/deaf program) for more than 350 intellectually and/or developmentally disabled (IDD) individuals (clients) throughout 30 counties in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. We have offices in Traverse City and Mancelona, Michigan. GTI's mission is, "GTI fiercely advocates, strengthens and advances the dignity and opportunities of people with disabilities, through services and employment." Our values are: INTEGRITY -We will do what we say, have strong moral principles, and act with uncompromising character. MERCY - We will treat people with kindness, not cruel or harsh, showing compassion for all. EMPATHY - We will understand and share feelings with one another, showing respect and dignity to all. INCLUSION - We will provide equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded due to their disabilities.

49 years ago, GTI was created to assist IDD individuals that were released from the Traverse City State Hospital with day program services and job training/supported employment opportunities. GTI's first development plan was creating our janitorial division for our clients where they received job training and supported employment with assisting area businesses with these needs. Our trash bag liner manufacturing business was developed in 2001, and clients worked with a job coach and trained to box the bags, seal and label the boxes. These programs were not only a way to assist GTI with being sustainable, but also created job opportunities for our IDD clients enabling them to earn a paycheck to live a more independent life. Today, we are proud to have secured the State of Michigan set-aside liner bag contract which brings in approximately \$2,000,000 annually to assist with our operations and program expenses.

Our previous Executive Director for many years was Steve Perdue, and over the years he secured many community partnerships with several businesses throughout northern Michigan, such as Lear. Our clients have been assisting Lear with completing small assembly jobs for the last 15 years. In addition to our in facility (Traverse City and Mancelona) type work, GTI's supported employment program is proudly assisting approximately 30 area businesses. This program works by securing contracts with area businesses who utilize the services of our clients to fill vital positions within their companies and work with the support of a job coach (supported employment enclaves). The types of work that our clients complete are small assembly work (putting two small parts together, making boxes, placing protective sheets then products in boxes to be shipped, apply labels, etc.), janitorial, administrative, food prep and cafeteria work/sanitization, and assisting businesses with getting their shipments out. We are proud to partner with Lear, Venturi, Grand Traverse Pie, Interlochen Center for the Arts, Food for Thought, Record-Eagle, Coast Guard Station Traverse City, API, Sara Lee, MDOT, Grand Traverse County, and Cherry Capital Airport just to name a few. Our clients are a vital part of our surrounding communities in that they are filling critical positions within these businesses helping to keep them open and running efficiently. Many would have to close down their business on certain days or reduce hours if our clients were not there to support them. In turn, our clients make a competitive paycheck which gives them purpose, self-worth, inclusion in our community, adding value to our community, and the chance to live a more independent life. We see this as a win, win for our community and clients!

GTI's Day Program provides educational, therapeutic, stimulating, and inclusive opportunities for our folks who are unable to work. We are proud that we offer our clients every life opportunity that everyone else

has such as volunteering in our community (Project Feed the Kids), bowling, going to the movies, library, shopping, and participating in community festivals and events. All of us at GTI believe that every individual deserves to be valued and respected and is capable of great things. Most clients want so desperately to earn a paycheck to gain as much independence as possible. They take pride in the work that they do for our customers, and it gives them purpose every day and boosts their self-esteem. In turn, our customers love our clients and highly value the work that they do for them citing their exceptional work ethic, dependability, and positive attitudes they bring to work every day. The services that GTI offers has positively impacted the lives of our clients enhancing their mental and behavioral health and their physical well-being.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INITIATIVE

In 2022, GTI consolidated all of our Traverse City operations into one building (addition to existing building; program manager offices, program activity rooms, exercise and therapy rooms, kitchen/activity rooms, multi-purpose area, and new workstation areas, total building square feet approximately 49,000) with the goal being ease of operations, have staff and clients under one roof, and be more fiscally sound with having only one building. The only thing still needed is a therapeutic outdoor recreation/activity (music, art, nature, exercise) area for our IDD clients and the community that we serve. Our transformational and impactful project is called, "GTI's Field of Dreams." [Color rendering included with application, available upon request.] GTI's Field of Dreams will be utilized in partnership with IDD individuals and staff from Northwest Education Services - Life Skills Building, Disability Network, our clients from our Traverse City and Mancelona location, and we welcome future community partnerships. Currently, our clients are utilizing our parking lot and entrance drive up area for on-site outdoor recreation, which is not ideal [picture included with application, available upon request.]

Outdoor recreation/activities/music, art, and nature therapy are essential daily needs for the physical well-being and mental health of IDD individuals. COVID reminded us how important outdoor activities and nature therapy is for our mental and physical health. We work with our clients to take them out into the community as much as possible for some exercise by walking on some trails around town, going to the park or beach, having lunch outside, playing basketball, swinging on swings, or trips to Planet Fitness. However, there are some limits to these community outings because of the annual budgeted funding allocated to these outings. With having our own on-site outdoor therapeutic/activity recreation space, we will be able to offer our IDD clients and other IDD individuals in our community daily outdoor program activities that will positively impact their physical health and mental health. Outdoor recreation for our clients is critical to their physical and mental health well-being. Adults with disabilities are more likely to have obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer than adults without disabilities. Physical activity can reduce the risk and help manage these chronic conditions. This is why we added basketball areas, swings, and activity picnic tables to our outdoor recreation/activity/therapy area.

IDD individuals are able to express themselves, their feelings, and communicate more easily through music and art. This impactful project also incorporates art and science by offering an outdoor wall mounted "Creation Art Station" where clients can paint or draw using various mediums and raised planting beds for our program staff to teach our clients how to grow a vegetable/flower garden, along with an observation butterfly garden area. Several other impactful benefits our IDD population will gain from this project are: stimulates learning; repetition and memorization are improved with the rhythm of

music aiding in the ability to recall; helps to focus a person's attention and allows attention to be directed more effectively; calms anxieties and relaxes an individual when stressed or over-stimulated; energizes and motivates an individual to continue or pursue additional efforts; aids in communication by stimulating and encouraging a person's speech as well as creating a path for nonverbal forms of communication, and improves a person's physical skills. This is why it was important for us to include an interactive musical sound garden to our outdoor therapy/memorial garden area honoring those that we have lost, along with an angel water fountain. We will be engraving bricks that will be located as part of the path around the memorial garden/angel fountain area with the names of clients that we have lost to honor them. Sadly, many IDD individuals do not have a family or a funeral and this is our opportunity for their friends here at GTI to honor and remember them.

Being blessed with being chosen as one of the Impact 100 Traverse City's grant awardees for 2023 would enable us to make "GTI's Field of Dreams" a reality. This project would be transformational and impactful because it will not only positively improve our IDD population's physical and mental health, but they will see that the people in their community support their needs, acknowledge their worth as a human being, and care about their well-being.

COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED

GTI currently serves 350 IDD (includes deaf/hearing impaired individuals as well) throughout the 30 counties that we serve (northern Michigan and the upper peninsula). With our partnership with Northwest Education Services, Disability Network, and other possible partnering organizations, we look at serving an additional 200 IDD individuals (program activity time will be scheduled for the health and safety of our IDD clients with community partner groups). Over the last 49 years, GTI has assisted approximately 8,000 individuals/families with job training, supported employment services, LISN services, and day programming. As of 2021, there are approximately 29,000 disabled individuals throughout the five-county region. Our IDD clients and IDD individuals from the community will benefit from this project by having the ADA access to hold regular outdoor exercise classes/yoga/aerobics, fresh air and sunshine, music and art therapy activities, basketball and swing usage, learn gardening and growing plants, eating lunch outside and socializing, and other scheduled program activities.

NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED AND GAPS IN EXISTING SERVICES

Grand Traverse Industries has offered our programs and services to IDD individuals since 1974 when our non-profit was formed by a group of parents and community individuals that wanted to assist the patients/loved ones released from the Traverse City State Hospital believing that all of them deserved every opportunity to live their best life possible! GTI was the first nonprofit in northern Michigan to support diversity, equity, and inclusion and provide job training, supported employment, and day programming to IDD individuals throughout northern Michigan. GTI has been and still is the only nonprofit organization offering all of these services for 49 years now. We have proudly assisted over 8,000 IDD individuals with job training, supported employment, day program services, and LIS'N services (hearing impaired/deaf interpretive services) enabling them to live their best lives possible!

Without GTI programs and services, these individuals would not have these vital opportunities for job training, employment, and day program activities (which include therapy activities as well), and socialization among their peers. There would be tremendous stress added to their loved ones' lives with how to care for them, and how to find ways for their IDD loved one to have a meaningful, purposeful, and joyful life. They would be lost souls! Thanks to GTI's programs and services, our IDD clients have these things that are most important to ALL of us, and the opportunity to live a more independent and purposeful life. Our IDD clients' families are so thankful for the programs and services GTI has to offer. They all get very emotional and breakdown to know that their son/daughter will have the opportunity to live their best life possible.

The parents/guardians also know that our dedicated staff treats all of our IDD clients as our own family and always welcome them as part of our GTI family with almost all of them staying with us until they pass away or move away. One family that responded to our quarterly "How are we doing?" surveys shared with us, "When we retired in 2020 and returned to Michigan with our adult son who has special needs, we knew we faced challenges. Paramount was getting a peer social network and finding opportunities for our son. The isolation of COVID-19 had taken a devastating toll on him. Thankfully, we discovered GTI. "B" has thrived at GTI! We can't say enough about the positive difference it has made in his life! He thoroughly enjoys the staff working there and the new friends he has made. The opportunity to get out into the community for activities with friends is something he thoroughly enjoys. Earning a paycheck is something he is very proud of and gives him purpose and makes him feel valued and included. He is engaged, challenged, and always looking forward to his time there amidst his friends. We are so thankful GTI is here for him!" Another parent testimonial from our satisfaction survey stated, "You do an amazing job. Thank you for your dedication to helping my son. If IDD people didn't have a job, like this to go to, where would they be? Lost! Keep up the great work!"

Building our "Field of Dreams" for our IDD population will enable us to expand and enhance our programs by offering outdoor therapeutic and educational activities and exercise not only for our IDD clients, but with our IDD community, existing community partners, and future collaborations. We do own some additional property behind our building we own here in Traverse City, and are looking to enhance this project in the future with an ADA pathway through the woods as we have turkey, deer, and birds around us. There is no other organization in northern Michigan offering this type of project to be shared with the community, and this is why we are seeking funding to make this dream a reality! If you met just one of our amazing IDD clients, you would understand our passion, advocacy, and diligence to give them every opportunity for them to live their best lives. This is why all 59 members of our staff and our 11 Board Members are dedicated to building "GTI's Field of Dreams" next year in 2024 as we will be celebrating 50 years of serving our IDD community and assisting businesses throughout our community.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROPOSED INITIATIVE

GTI has submitted several other grant applications asking for support for this transformational and impactful project, and will be submitting additional grants, if needed. We have secured \$6,900 in donations, \$15,000 earned revenue, and \$25,000 in grant funding (Biederman Foundation) towards our \$269,900 project total. Our staff and Board of Directors will continue to fundraise to bring "GTI's Field of Dreams" to life through digital appeals in our newsletter, and a direct mail campaign to our supporters. It would be the best of both worlds to be able to share this project next year with our community and

celebrate our 50 years of dedicated service to area businesses and the 8,000+ IDD individuals we have assisted over the past 49 years.

GTI has remained financially sustainable for 49 years, and we are proud to be fiscally sound and stable with varied revenue streams that support our nonprofit organization. We have been blessed to have the full support of our community, and to have positively impacted the lives of so many IDD individuals. Our clients and their families become one of our family with most IDD clients staying with us until they retire or pass away. We are proud that we have successfully sustained our plastic bag manufacturing business, supported enclave program, organizational employment program, and day program since 1974. This has been accomplished through having multiple revenue streams, grants, donations, being fiscally responsible, support from the community, donors, grantors, and volunteers.