# PLATO

## PLATO PHILOSOPHY FUND APPLICATION

### THANK YOU FOR APPLYING!

*Project Title: Geek Philosophy Expansion*
*Dates for Project:  March 2018-August 2018*
*Amount of Funding Requested: $4600.00*

1. **Please describe the project, including any work that has already been done to develop it. (500 words max)**

Geek Philosophy is an ongoing community philosophy program that serves ages 8–adult. It uses science fiction/fantasy books, films, TV shows, and roleplaying games to help participants become proficient in thinking through the big ideas of philosophy.

The science fiction/fantasy genre lends itself particularly well to philosophy discussion. These stories depict worlds that are different enough from our own to excite the imaginations of readers and similar enough to our own to provoke meaningful real-world questions. Over the last four years, Geek Philosophy discussions have delved into every branch of philosophy.

Our children and teen participants have historically come from every middle and high school in the Saint Vrain Valley School District, some are homeschooled, and a few come from outside our school district. Many of our participants have been diagnosed with special needs, such as autism spectrum disorder, sensory processing disorder, learning differences, depression, and anxiety.

Facilitators are trained in the Geek Philosophy Method, a holistic Socratic approach that makes use of all that is best in science fiction/fantasy fan culture. Because of their immersion in stories like *Harry Potter* and *Doctor Who*, participants enter our programs already curious about possibilities beyond their everyday experiences. They report an almost immediate sense of belonging because they have found a place to share their enthusiasm with other fans, even if they are not all passionate about the same things. This helps to create a safe place for them to examine their deepest thoughts.

**Geek Philosophy Program Components include:**
Grey Havens Young Adult (YA)–a group of 33 $6^{th}$–$12^{th}$ graders meeting weekly since December 2013 for chapter-by-chapter book discussions. Additional activities include participant-led philosophy discussions, movie and TV-based philosophy discussions, and a thought-provoking roleplaying game created and led by participants.

Prefects/Junior Prefects (Harry Potter and Philosophy groups)–Two groups of 12-18 year olds and three groups of 8-11 year olds meeting monthly since December 2016 for chapter-by-chapter Harry Potter book discussions that emphasize philosophical ideas. The group also hosts periodic special events that include friends and family.

Intergenerational Philosophy–a monthly pop culture philosophy discussion program for all ages at the Longmont Senior Center. These discussions have been part of the Senior Center's catalog since 2016.

Podcasts and Videos—The Geek Philosophy podcast launches in February 2018 on multiple platforms. The podcast is hosted by Geek Philosophy facilitators under the guidance of a volunteer producer. Geek Philosophy program participants have already contributed short segments to pre-recorded episodes. Our younger Geek Philosophy participants are particularly eager to contribute to the podcast and create other online content.

Fandoms Unite Outreach—a fun, interactive pop culture-based program open to regular Geek Philosophy participants and newcomers of all ages. Fandoms Unite is essential to the geeky identity of our program. It has been building confidence and community among participants since 2013.

Geek Philosophy Outreach–a proposed program of philosophy discussions—including philosophy walks, philosophy lunches and teas, film and philosophy discussions, and philosophical gaming—open to regular Geek Philosophy participants and newcomers of all ages.


## 2. What is the purpose of this project? (500 words max)

The Geek Philosophy Expansion is an initiative to make an already thriving community philosophy program available to more people more often. Grey Havens Group's Geek Philosophy program is a network of book discussion groups throughout Boulder and Weld Counties in Colorado. We are a community that has fun, cares for each other, and where profound philosophical inquiry is the norm.

The expansion also includes a plan to better measure the overall impact of existing programs by periodically administering Pediatric Quality of Life Inventories to children and teen participants, as well as subjective measurement tools, such as parent and participant surveys and individual conferences with staff.

In its more than four-year history, Grey Havens YA has never been without a waiting list. Prefects groups also often have waiting lists and participants clamor to meet more often and have more opportunities to include their friends. We regularly hear from individuals outside our

programming area who would like to participate in our discussions. The Geek Philosophy Expansion will open our community of inquiry to more local participants and remote participants throughout the world.

**Our goals include:**
- Training additional Geek Philosophy facilitators
- Increasing the frequency of Prefects/Junior Prefects meetings
- Increasing opportunities for Geek Philosophy participants to contribute to the Geek Philosophy podcast and add their own thought-provoking projects to our website
- Increasing the frequency of Fandoms Unite Outreach programs
- Increasing the involvement of Grey Havens YA and Prefects participants in providing philosophy outreach for others in their communities
- Introducing new intergenerational outreach philosophy programs that will provide opportunities to those who are unable to commit to an ongoing group.
- Providing more opportunities for remote participation, such as podcasting and interactive, livestreamed philosophy discussions

## 3. Who will benefit from the project, and how? (500 words max)

The very existence of an ongoing philosophical community benefits all citizens by broadcasting the importance of engaging in thinking creatively and critically with one's neighbors. Geek Philosophy outreach programs are open to all because we believe that philosophy is a way of life and everyone should have access to a healthy community of inquiry.

The current participants in all Geek Philosophy programs benefit from increased opportunities to make philosophy part of their everyday lives, including opportunities to model philosophical inquiry through both local outreach and online programs.

Participants in our Prefects group benefit from opportunities to meet more often, thus creating a more cohesive community of young thinkers. This will also create more opportunities for those on the waiting list and others to join in the discussions.

Measuring the impact our children-teen programs have on the quality of life of participants helps us to improve and replicate our programs so that we can share what we learn with other organizations and communities.

Outreach and online participants benefit from opportunities to participate in our philosophical community in ways that are accessible and convenient.

## 4. What is the plan for developing and implementing the project? Include a timeline.

**Expansion Needs:**
- 1 laptop for audio/video editing, and creation and presentation of outreach content
- 5 electronic tablets to loan to children and teen participants to allow them to create shareable content based on group discussions
- 2 copies of Moho Pro 12 Animation Studio
- 35 books each quarter for children-teen discussions
- Art supplies so that participants can occupy their hands and express themselves visually during discussions
- A set of 30 sturdy, washable cushions so that we can host Geek Philosophy discussions and outreach events anywhere, including outdoors

**2018 Expansion Timeline:**

February:

> Geek Philosophy Podcast launches with some participation from children and teens
> New Fandoms Unite Outreach program launches at the Firehouse Art Center in Longmont
> Hold a Young Adult Advisory Meeting open to all 6th through 12th grade participants in Geek Philosophy programs
> With the help of our youth advisors, schedule creative audio/video projects and other content to support the Geek Philosophy podcast (Follow-up advisory meetings will be held monthly.)
> Administer Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory to current Grey Havens YA participants
> Administer Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory to a sample group of Prefects participants
> Administer subjective feedback surveys to all Geek Philosophy participants and parents

March:

> Provide training for current children/youth support volunteers to become Geek Philosophy facilitators.
> Recruit additional children/youth support volunteers
> Launch Geek2Geek conferences by inviting parents and participants to meet individually with staff

April:

> Purchase laptop and animation software to improve staff's ability to create and edit podcasts and outreach programming
> Purchase tablets to loan to children/youth so that they can:
> - Record their own podcast segments
> - Record their own philosophical reflections (audio and/or video)

- Record philosophy discussions with friends and family
- Create animations to illustrate group discussions or their own reflections
- Create written blog content
- Create art to support the podcast, blog, and website
- Collaborate with staff to create Fandoms Unite and Geek Philosophy Outreach program content
- Be thoughtful and creative in ways we haven't thought of yet

May:
With the help of newly trained facilitators, expand Prefects and Junior Prefects meetings to twice monthly

June:
Expand Fandoms Unite Outreach to at least one event a month
Invite outreach participants to record podcast segments at Outreach events
Launch livestreaming and online philosophy discussions featuring Geek Philosophy participants of all ages

July:
Grey Havens YA and Prefects come together to plan and implement a five-day Harry Potter Summer Camp (Hogwarts Preparatory Academy) for ages 8-11 at the Longmont Museum
Participants will use their tablets to create lessons, produce videos, and record podcast segments from the camp.

August:
Launch monthly Geek Philosophy Outreach activities

September:
Assess feasibility of monthly afterschool Geek Philosophy Discussions (based on number of available facilitators)
Administer Quality of Life Inventories to Grey Havens YA participants and sample Prefects group
Administer subjective feedback surveys to parents and participants

## 5. What other funding sources have you explored for this project?

Meeting space for Grey Havens YA and Prefects/Junior Prefects discussions, as well as some Fandoms Unite programs, is provided free or at significantly reduced cost through partnerships with the High Plains Library District and Firehouse Art Center. Longmont Senior Center charges a nominal fee for participation in Intergenerational Philosophy discussions for those who can pay. 75% of this revenue goes to Grey Havens Group and is typically enough to cover or significantly defray the remaining cost of meeting space rental.

Grey Havens Group was a recipient of Lucky's Market Longmont's Bag for Change program.

Funds raised by Lucky's Market cover costs associated with producing facilitator training manuals and other training materials as well as t-shirts for Grey Havens YA participants.

Recording equipment for the Geek Philosophy podcast was provided by an individual donor.

Grey Havens Group recently applied for a grant from Longmont Community Foundation to cover additional staff time associated with recruiting and training new facilitators.

## 6. Please list your budget, including any amounts from other sources.

**Geek Philosophy Expansion Budget:**
Laptop: $500
5 Electronic Tablets: $1000
2 Copies of Moho Pro 12 Animation Studio: $400
Art Supplies: $300
Books (including a series of graphic novels) for Grey Havens YA: $1750
30 Seating Cushions: $650

**Overall Program Budget (not including items listed above):**
Meeting Space: $480/year for one meeting a week at Firehouse Art Center
Additional Meeting/Outreach Space: $600/year
Training Manuals: $1400
Outreach Promotion: $150
Grey Havens YA T-shirts: $250