

# Expressions

WINTER 2014

Promoting the creative power in people with disabilities.

## Raising Awareness...

### What is Art?

If you ask 100 people "what is art?" there's a good chance you will get 100 different answers. The opportunity to explore this question came to life this fall in an exciting collaboration with Forward Theater Company in Madison.

Forward Theater's presentation of John Logan's Tony award-winning play *Red*, depicts the life of abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko. The story challenges perceptions and raises awareness about art and the creative process. Sound familiar? That's exactly what VSA Wisconsin does.

This collaboration with Forward Theater inspired us to think outside the box. We challenged the teaching artists at the art center to use the theme *What Is Art?* in their classes. Excitedly, they implemented new ideas for individual and collaborative art making that hadn't been tried before. One teaching



artist projected images of work by famous artists. After viewing a Kandinsky, one participant, who had previously only drawn cats, drew something entirely different, and with complementary colors. Another participant, who has a very short attention span, finished an entire project and proudly pointed out shapes in his storybooks -- a new accomplishment for him. In a music and movement class, participants viewed a video of a flash mob dancing in an airport which inspired them to learn the art of swing dancing. Participants in a ceramics class created self portrait masks and animals, exploring art within themselves and through nature.



Original visual artworks created in the classes along with pictorial images of music and movement classes are now on view at the VSA Wisconsin gallery through April 10. Hours are Monday-Thursday 9 am-3 pm or by appointment. Please join us in exploring creative expression and the relationship between art and viewer.

## To Our Donors...

### Thank you for your support

Once again, your generosity and acts of kindness have changed thousands of lives. Your support has made a difference and helped fulfill dreams that were once thought impossible.

On the following pages, we share some of the program highlights made possible by your gifts and in turn, some of you tell us why you volunteer or provide financial support to VSA Wisconsin. We are honored by your support and will continue to work hard to uphold the confidence you have placed in our organization.

*Kathie Wagner*



Kathie Wagner  
President

**VSA**

WISCONSIN

The State Organization  
on Arts and Disability

## & News Events

### Art Exhibitions

#### Creative Power

A traveling exhibition featuring 30 award winning works from across the state

Ripon Public Library  
Ripon  
Feb. 20 - Apr. 30

#### Visual Expressions

A Call for Art Exhibition  
VSA Wisconsin Gallery  
Madison  
Apr. 21 - May 3

### Call for Entries

#### Playwright Discovery Competition

Deadline Apr. 28  
Application found at  
[http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs/playwright\\_discovery.cfm](http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs/playwright_discovery.cfm)

### Events

#### Visual Expressions Public Reception

VSA Wisconsin Gallery  
Madison  
May 3, 2-4 pm

VSA Wisconsin  
1709 Aberg Ave.  
Suite 1

Madison, WI 53704  
608-241-2131  
[www.vsawis.org](http://www.vsawis.org)

# Successes and Smiles...

## Art Center



"When given choices on various activities, participants usually wanted to play the drums; they were very open to structure and trying new exercises. We had a great final class where we told a story with the music; I didn't impose any story on them, they discovered it on their own and contributed ideas on what sounds we could use to tell a story about reindeer on vacation. After exploring various music dynamics and listening exercises, we also had some wonderful improvisational music sessions!"

~Fiona Stoner, teaching artist

"Thank you so much...for providing such wonderful classes for all our special people. Pam was so unhappy when her "Painting Galore" class was done. She keeps underlining the dates in her calendar for her new classes to start. It adds so much to her life." ~ Sandi Grote

Visual art is a very important part of Casey's DeZonia's life. He likes expressing his creativity by building pottery, 3-D projects, and oil pastel drawings. His favorite subjects are drawn from cartoons, comics, animals, science, and nature. Sometimes his work encompasses ideas such as women's rights in America. At VSA Wisconsin he can make creations that he cannot do at home. Casey's father, Barry, says "I am very grateful for the opportunities that Casey has had to explore his interests and share them with people. I see the pride Casey takes in the recognition of his talents by others. And I know that this would not have happened without VSA."



## Early Childhood Residencies



Many Early Childhood residencies focused on opportunities for language development. Music activities included singing, props, animal instruments, parachute, rhymes, and movement. New instruments such as woodblocks, rainsticks, frog guiros, scrapers,

thunder tubes, duck guiros, and sandblocks were used to increase enthusiasm and allow for a sense of accomplishment mastering a new skill. Some activities were tied to curriculum topics, furthering experiences in another area. Movement activities allowed experiences with wands and scarves. They also incorporated stop-start elements giving practice in impulse control and motor planning.

One very shy child in a creative drama residency initially would not speak and only responded to yes and no questions by shaking his head. He showed great interest when the teaching artist arrived and by the third session he began to actively participate in the activities. Soon he began to utter single words and now he answers questions when they are asked of the group. The student is starting to open up during the school day and the teacher says she is sure that it is in direct correlation with his positive experience during the residency.



## Choirs

Almost 200 people with disabilities participate in the state-wide choir program. Choir members learn about pitch, tone, rhythm, movement, basic music history and composition and share their accomplishments through public performances.

Each semester the Madison choir learns one new song that is particularly complex and challenges the group to expand their abilities. Last winter they mastered "Carol of the Bells," a three-part round, as well as "Zum Gali Gali" and the "Banana Boat Song." Members of the Stoughton choir are using rhythm instruments as they sing and also are given a chance to lead songs with the director. In addition to new musical accomplishments, choir members are also demonstrating increased self confidence and social skills. Hazel\* was previously quite withdrawn, but now interacts with others more, giving "high 5's," and coming up to the front to perform in a group. Sissy\* is very helpful in passing out instruments without being asked, as well as helping to put them away. She is also a leader with the drums and other instruments.



\*Names changed to protect privacy



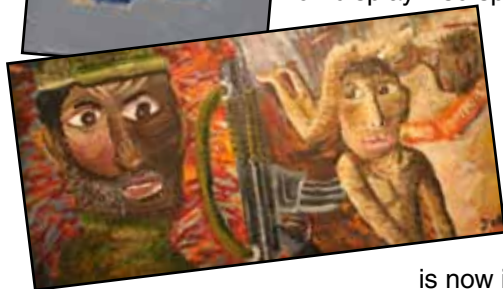
# ...To Remember

## Call for Art

According to Barb Drews, art teacher at West High School, Madison, the Call for Art program is an authentic and valuable experience for students. Over the years, many of her students have received purchase awards or recognition awards resulting from this program and it has given them great validation as artists. Not only are the students gaining pride and self confidence in their art endeavors, some now consider art as a viable career opportunity. Many are continuing to keep art as a focal point in their lives. She says, "Regardless of the countless outcomes, the experience itself is priceless!"



More than 400 people visited the Call for Art *Visual Expressions* exhibition while it was on view in 2013. Many positive remarks were written in the exhibition comment book. One mother wrote: "What a pleasant surprise to see both of my boys' art work on display—so special for Mom since neither like fine motor activities!!"



Torin Wilke received a 2013 Purchase Award and his work entitled "Darkness"

is now in the VSA traveling exhibition. Torin's mother says, "Our family is so excited for him. They can see how he loves his art. I think his art makes him very happy. Obviously there are a lot of things that he struggles doing because of his disability, but through his art, I think it opens up a lot of people's eyes. They see what he can do. He can do what everybody can do."

## VSA Day

VSA Day is an annual performance opportunity for individuals with disabilities to showcase their musical accomplishments at a UW Badger football game. VSA Wisconsin choir members from Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids signed the National Anthem and students from Medford, DeForest, Belmont and Tomah performed with the UW Marching Band. Two students who attended have Autism and Down Syndrome. Both participate fully in the Tomah Marching Band program and one is also a member of the Concert Choir. Charlie O'Brien, director of instrumental music says "Their participation in the arts is one of the many



examples of how immersion into the classroom benefits everyone involved. The arts are an important part of their lives and your event reinforces how music should be available to anyone and everyone regardless of ability level or special needs.

Thank you again for the very special event and I hope we can participate for years to come. The only thing I would change would



be to have even more students participate so they can share such a worthwhile experience. I look forward to working with you in the future and please share my sincerest thank you and praise with your organization, donors, and volunteers."

## School & Community Artist Residencies

In Wisconsin Rapids, adults with disabilities participated in a puppetry residency at the Opportunity Development Center. They created rod, hand, and mouth puppets and learned how to manipulate them for a performance. Using the music of "Carnival of the Animals" as inspiration, participants performed with their puppets before an audience of 120. According to the teaching artist, one participant was initially reluctant to lift her arms. However, the desire to hold her puppet up and move it was strong and she was ultimately able to perform this task. The participant was also non-verbal during the residency workshops, but during the final performance, her cat puppet let out a most surprising 'meow!'



A residency at Mendota Elementary School in Madison directly impacted 340 students and resulted in a large mural. In his program application, art teacher Nate Kirley wrote, "Initially, I was intrigued by VSA's philosophy of universal design in relation to teaching art; making the project accessible to everyone and implementing best practices across the board. We had so much success with VSA last year we decided to work with them again." An inclusive learning setting like Mendota Elementary School provided an environment in which children of all abilities could grow and develop, particularly as they worked side-by-side to design and complete the mural.

## REPORT ON GIVING - JULY 1, 2012 -JUNE 30, 2013

*Thank you to the following individuals, businesses, foundations, and partners who responded to grant requests, direct mail, newsletter and email solicitations, and workplace giving campaigns to provide generous financial and inkind support. Due to printing deadlines, this report reflects cash and documented inkind gifts received from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. Pledges made, but not received during this period will be included in the next fiscal year report.*

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*"VSA Wisconsin offers individuals with disabilities a unique opportunity to do stuff that most of us take for granted, it is an organization that puts pride and achievement into the minds of people that so much need it. Check out*

*one of their art exhibitions, you will be amazed at the pride and messaging within the works on display and equally amazed with the quality."*

- Andy Walder, donor and volunteer (pictured above on right)

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## REPORT ON GIVING- JULY 1, 2012 - JUNE 30, 2013

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*"I support VSA Wisconsin because I have seen up close, the wonderful joy and sense of accomplishment that participants exude, just given an opportunity to showcase their artistry. VSA Wisconsin staff, teaching artists and volunteers dedicate their time and amazing affection to help those challenged*

*and less fortunate by providing them opportunities to achieve. One look into any of their eyes, will warm your heart and soul."*

-Tony Canonie, donor

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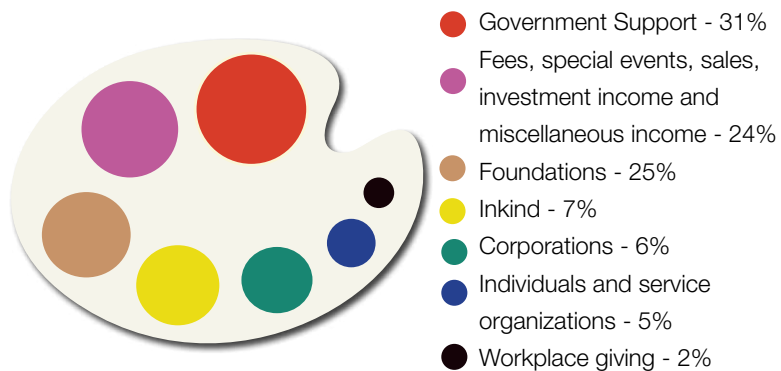
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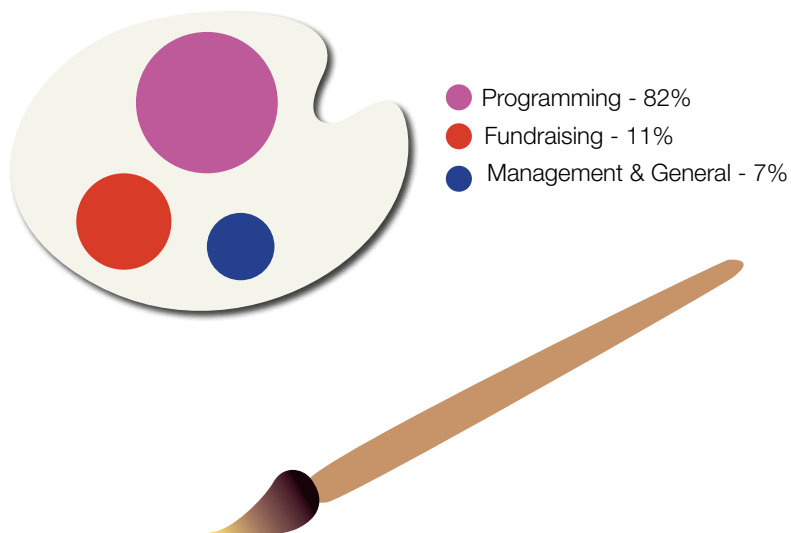
*"Art speaks when words fail, and certainly for VSA, people learn to express themselves and find value in their talents when other avenues fail them. Having other people value and appreciate their work grows their self-respect and self-confidence, which is a miracle to see. The human qualities of caring, compassion, and encouragement are so evident in VSA that it's heartwarming to witness. It should be an example to follow in other areas of our lives. VSA is a great place to start your investment in a more positive world!"*

- Diane Ballweg, donor

## Revenues



## Expenses



### FY13 by the numbers

Educational art programs directly served **1,828** individuals, most with disabilities

Slightly more than **82%** of annual expenses were devoted to programming

More than **285,549** people were impacted by exhibitions, concerts, and special performances by individual with disabilities

**95** volunteers provided **615** hours of support for administration, programs and events



VSA Wisconsin partners with Edgewood College art therapy students and Milwaukee Area Technical College occupational therapy students to assist with selected VSA Wisconsin programming. These volunteers gain valuable experience working with people with disabilities, and bring a fresh perspective to the programs.

*"Through your mentoring, Abby [art therapy student intern in the VSA Art Center in 2013] gained so much practical experience and insight in the benefits of art therapy with adults with a range of needs and abilities. She was inspired by the staff's role modeling and the excellent program you have created for VSA Wisconsin. Through your supervision, Abby's skills and confidence have flourished! The Edgewood College Art Therapy Program would not be able to provide the level of education that we desire without our community partners. We value our relationship with VSA Wisconsin."*

~ Professor Janice Havlena, Edgewood College



Support VSA Wisconsin when the defending Northwoods League Champion Madison Mallards play the Kenosha Kingfish

Thursday June 5, 7:05 pm  
at Warner Park in Madison



- Prior to the game, the VSA Choir of Madison will sign (in American Sign Language) and sing the National Anthem.
- Purchase tickets from VSA Wisconsin: \$15 for a reserved seat and a Mallards hat. \$5 of every ticket sold in this manner will directly benefit VSA Wisconsin.
- During the game, VSA Wisconsin will conduct a 50/50 ("share the pot") raffle.



Please participate in VSA Wisconsin's Charter Community Connection Night at the "Duck Pond." To purchase tickets, go to [www.Mallardsgroups.com](http://www.Mallardsgroups.com). Enter the code "vsa" and at the bottom of the page click "Buy" and choose your seats in the Green section. Call VSA Wisconsin at 608-241-2131 with questions.

Deadline is May 22.

## VSA Choir of Appleton... Performs with Fox Valleyaires

On December 10, the VSA Choir of Appleton joined the Fox Valleyaires Men's Barbershop Chorus in a holiday concert in Perry Hall at UW Fox Valley, Menasha. The choir sang two songs midway through the concert and then joined the Fox Valleyaires for holiday favorites, "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" at the end of the program.



It was a very fun event for the choir members. In addition to singing on stage before a large audience, choir members got to spend time in the dressing room before the performance. When the final song ended, one choir member summed up the experience with a smile and said, "That was wonderful!" Choir director Tiffany Vollrath hopes to participate in more events like this in the future.

The choir rehearses weekly at First English Lutheran Church. Established in 1995, this ongoing program allows individuals with disabilities the opportunity to actively contribute to the social, cultural and economic life of the Fox Cities.

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The mission of VSA Wisconsin is to expand the capabilities, confidence and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities by providing programs in dance, drama, creative writing, music and visual art.

VSA Wisconsin is a member of the VSA affiliate network, a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This newsletter is made possible in part through funding provided by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support has been provided by: Advertisers Press and xpedx.



Transportation for VSA Wisconsin is provided with support from Kayser Automotive Group.

*To receive this newsletter in an alternative format, contact VSA Wisconsin.*

## You are invited! Visual Expressions

A Call for Art exhibition celebrating the creative power of people with disabilities.

VSA Wisconsin Gallery  
 1709 Aberg Ave, Madison

Public Reception  
 Saturday May 3, 2-4 pm



## GALLERY HOURS

Apr 21 - May 3

Mon - Thur  
 9am - 3 pm