

# ABILITY

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The Magazine of

Center for  
Disability Services

Where people get better at life™

Fall, 2014

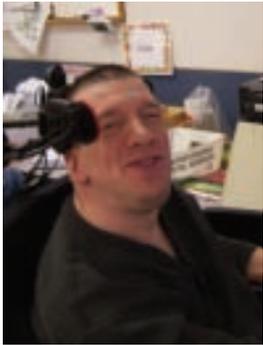
Art is the lie that enables us to realize the truth.

*Pablo Picasso*



**ARTS ISSUE**  
Music • Recipes • Art

## Letter from the Editor: Ed Bartz



Writing is a form of artistic expression and in this issue of capABILITY Magazine you will experience many, many different forms of art. Personally, my favorite form of art is acting, in particular, stage acting. Whenever I have the time and money, I am attending a play of some sort. The C-R Center Stars, an acting troupe comprised of people who have disabilities, seem to perform with ease and professionalism. You will be amazed when you read about the spectacular plays which C-R Center Stars have adapted.

Our annual art show would rival any other exhibit on the East coast. The staff of the Center for Disability Services, in cooperation with the people we serve, show off our talents as artists. Every medium is represented in this annual event, from photography to items which are tactile. All had a place during this event. Every year the art exhibit receives more and more entries making it exponentially more difficult for the judges to choose the best entry in multiple categories.

For some people who live at home, there are times when parents or friends are not able to meet them after they get out of school or work. The Center helps fill this time with an arts program in Troy at The Arts Center of the Capital Region. This program allows people to socialize and learn to create new crafts, work on cooking skills and make new friends. This is only one example of how the Center has a positive working relationship with organizations and businesses in the Capital District and beyond. You will learn more about this collaboration as you read on.

The Center for Disability Services is chock full of people with different talents. From the ground to the kitchen, you learn where the ingredients are harvested and how they are combined to form a tasty dish. Cooking groups love to show off their talents before each member devours their share of the recipe of the day.

The Center for Disability Services is constantly growing. In 2013, Prospect Center, located in Queensbury, New York, became a division of the Center for Disability Services. Prospect Center also serves people of all ages with autism spectrum disorders and various developmental disabilities by providing diagnosis, treatment, education and family support. There is plenty of creativity in Queensbury and other information in this issue might even inspire you to search for your own art outlet.

-Ed Bartz  
Editor, capABILITY Magazine

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# Jazz Playing Duo Shares Its Gift

We often relate a memory to a song or a style of music. For Pat Viglucci and Ian Hunter, creating a soundtrack for other people has been a part of their lives for decades. Viglucci is an alto saxophone player, although in high school he played drums for his high school band. He would play for high school activities, such as dances and other local events. After high school, Viglucci attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. He spent a year studying music. Viglucci was always into the musical genre of jazz and enjoys talking about the history of this genre with those who are interested. His enthusiasm can be contagious. His friend, Ian Hunter, is just as enthusiastic about this form of expression and they enjoy booking gigs together.

Hunter, an alto sax player since high school, has made a name for himself and his group “Jazz Connection.” Hunter plays numerous instruments. They include the guitar and a wind synthesizer which allows him to adapt to different styles of music within the jazz genre, giving Hunter the freedom to make a piece of music his own while keeping the intentions of the original artist. The wind synthesizer is an excellent instrument for Hunter.

This duo has the luxury of not having to advertise their talent. Word of mouth has been more than enough to keep them in the local music scene for quite some time. Hunter and Viglucci have also traveled throughout the Capital District and destinations beyond the region. Hunter’s favorite place to play is the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Mass. He just loves the atmosphere. The crowd always enjoys his music and ability to entertain.

Recently this duo and a few of their contemporaries performed for the people who work at 700 South Pearl Street. Both Viglucci and Hunter are employees of the Center for Disability Services and work closely with adult program participants. Viglucci assists people who have disabilities with problem solving and figuring out ways to accomplish work presented to them. Once jobs from the community are secured, Hunter has the task of figuring out how individuals are going to best complete the job. This process is influenced by input from other staff who know the capabilities and skills of each person with whom they work.

During Viglucci and Hunter’s wonderful performance they tailored their music to tunes which some people would recognize, as well as teaching the audience about different styles of jazz. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the performance and made the band feel appreciated.



# Pumpkins at Prospect

The Day Habilitation program at Prospect Center in Queensbury held its annual pumpkin decorating competition in October 2013. The event is always highly anticipated and this year was no different. Five pumpkins were decorated with the emphasis placed on originality, creativity and, as always, teamwork. After much communication between the participants and teammates, final decisions were made on the subject of each pumpkin.



The pumpkins were cleaned and prepped for painting. Teams were sent out to the local craft store to purchase colors needed to complete their works. The teams were given a week to finish. Great fun was had by all as the deadline approached!

We really appreciated all those who came in to vote as well as family members and others who voted through email!

As part of this annual event, the program participants delivered a pumpkin to every classroom at the Prospect School. It really was the best part of the event as each classroom was so excited to have its own pumpkin to have and hold. We look forward to next year's event!

# The Expressions



"I love to sing, especially the songs I learned as a child," says Millie, whose alto voice adds depth and panache to our sound. The Expressions is the name of our group, and we've been active for a little over three years. Consisting of about 20 members, we perform twice a year, once during the holiday season and again during the spring. While we stay with more traditional fare at Christmastime, our repertory has varied for our spring show. One year, for example, we focused on patriotic and folk songs. Another year our selections were from what's often called the Great American Songbook. "I love the old standards," says Pat, another longtime member of the group. Pat has a beautiful high soprano. Her intonation is dead on, and she has a range of two and half octaves. She performed one of her favorite numbers, "When I Fall in Love," in our last concert as a solo, and it was a show stopper.

Not everyone participates by singing, however. Helen plays the xylophone, for example, providing a lovely soft percussive effect, perfectly complimenting the piano. Others play the drums, and still others play the bells or the maracas.

The point is, every member of the group does something that adds to the richness and beauty of our sound. Everyone makes music. Some of us do it completely on our own, others need assistance. No matter. We're in it together, and we love it!

# Locally Created Software Brings Music to More

Adaptive Use Musical Instruments, or AUMI, has presented the possibility of creating and recording music for people with limited voluntary movement. You may be asking yourself, what is AUMI and how does it work? AUMI is software which enables people who have limited movement to independently engage in creating music. It works by enabling the user to play sounds and musical phrases through movement and gestures. This allows the user to improvise on an instrument. This software utilizes a web cam which tracks your movements on screen and allows you to trigger notes or sound effects using any part of your body. You can choose from a long list of instruments that are now available. You can trigger drum sounds, woodwind and brass instruments, guitars and orchestral sounds such as violin or cello. The software even includes fun sound effects for experimentation.

AUMI was created locally by engineers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the community education initiatives of the Deep Listening Institute. This effort was led by local musician, composer and humanitarian Pauline Oliveros. The software interface has been made available as a free internet download (Google Deep Listening Institute to find it online) and is now in use by therapists both nationally and internationally. The AUMI program is continuously being revised and improved upon by technologists, students, therapists and through feedback from registered users. The Deep Listening Institute even offers a free on-site training program to assist any newcomer who may be interested in experimenting with this music software. The latest initiative is the development of an AUMI iPad App.

When I first found out about this program I was excited to download it myself just to play with the software at home. A way to have access to making music without actually needing a physical instrument seemed fascinating to me. You simply set up a web cam, select a body part to track, and you are all set. Simply move to trigger the program to create music. The easy access of being able to create music by simply moving was exciting to me, but when I first started using it at the Center for Disability Services' 700 South Pearl Street site with people who have never had physical access to a keyboard or guitar, the experience went beyond excitement. Every person I worked with instantly had a huge smile on their face.

Everyone who used AUMI had an amazing look of joy and amusement. Watching people bobbing their heads back and forth happily soloing on a tune for the first time was heart-warming. AUMI allows the user to trigger sounds within a



specific scale, such as a blues scale or major or minor scale. On Garageband, I set up a backing music loop that was in a corresponding key and scale. The user was able to improvise and solo over a piece of music. I created a country loop and a hip hop loop, a pop loop and a rock loop. That way they could improvise and solo to music they enjoyed. It's inspiring to see a new outlet available to people with disabilities. Playing and making music is an incredibly cathartic experience, and now it is finally available to people who never had access to it before. We at the Center for Disability Services would like to thank Pauline Oliveros and The Deep Listening Institute and all of the RPI students who helped establish this software for opening up a world of musical possibilities which never existed before. Thank you—from all of us to you!

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**Three Steps:** (1) Pie dough; (2) Streusel Topping; and (3) Apple Filling

#### Pie dough Ingredients (pate sucree)

- 3 eggs
- 5 ¼ cups flour (all white or half white and half white whole wheat and/ or barley flour)
- 1 ½ cups-sugar
- 12 oz. -butter, softened (if using sweet butter add a pinch of salt it helps to keep the dough tender)
- 2 T-vanilla extract

Note: Either pie dough can be frozen and used later for pie shells or for cut-out cookies.

And either recipe can also be used for top crust or lattice top for pie.

#### Method

1. In mixer with paddle attachment add ingredients in the above order beginning with the eggs.
2. Mix together on med. speed for about 1 min. or until dough forms a ball, add a little flour if necessary. Over mixing will toughen dough
3. By hand, divide dough into 2 parts and knead until it sticks together
4. Wrap in plastic wrap or baggie and let rest for at least ½ hour or up to 1 week. This step will help keep the dough together while rolling.
5. On lightly floured surface roll out dough to about 1/8 “ fold over rolling pin to transfer into deep pie pan (too much flour makes dough hard and dry)
6. Place pie shell in freezer for at least 15min. but up to a few days if making ahead of time.
7. Coat frozen pie shell with egg wash (1 egg whisked together with 1 tsp. water)
8. Bake frozen pie shell blond, without browning about 10 min.@375 F.
9. Let shell cool before filling

Freezing pie shell before baking reduces shrinkage. Egg wash and pre-baking shell keeps the crust from becoming soggy by forming a barrier between the filling and the crust.

#### Streusel Ingredients (crumb topping)

- 3 cups flour
- 2 ½ -cups oatmeal
- 3-4 T-ground cinnamon
- 1 lb.- sweet butter(softened)
- 2 ½ cups sugar

#### Method

1. Mix all dry ingredients together with paddle attachment on mixer or mix by hand
2. Add butter and mix about 1 min. in mixer or by hand until dry ingredients are absorbed by the butter and ½ “ crumbs form.
3. Keep cool until ready to use or freeze in plastic bags for up to a few months

# Apple Pie

#### Apple Pie filling

- 6-7-large apples cored, partially skinned and sliced ¼ “ (if possible use a mixture of sweet (Empire, Delicious) and tart (Granny Smith) apples.
- 1/2 cup-maple syrup
- 1 T-cinnamon, 1/4 tsp. cloves
- 1 tsp-Vanilla extract 1
- 1 tsp-lemon juice
- 1 T-flour
- 1-2 T butter, cut into chips

#### Method

1. Mix all ingredients together and place in pre-baked pie shell.
2. Cover apples with Streusel, lattice or solid top crust (whichever topping you choose).
3. If using lattice: Egg wash lattice before placing on pie.
4. If using a solid crust: Egg wash after placing crust onto pie. Make sure to cut 5 slits into upper crust to allow steam to escape.

Bake Pie @ 375-400 F for 1½ hours or until golden brown and juices bubble up through the top of the pie

The apples that were picked at Goold Orchards were various varieties which made them ideal for cooking. We used Rome, Empire and Golden Delicious apples to bake sixty portions of apple pie.

Shortly after the apple picking trip the entire Center was mourning the loss of two of our own, who were very close to our hearts. Our Wednesday cooking group wanted to do something special to help ease the pain of our loss. I hope the pie helped in some small way.

Sorry to those who didn't get a taste. This was a spontaneous reaction and we ran out of apples and time to feed the entire building. Hope you enjoy the recipe.



# Is It Art or Is It Respite?

The concept of an After-school After-work Respite Program is not new or different. However, choosing to locate it at an arts center rather than at a school or day program qualifies as a new twist on an old idea. The premise behind an AS/AW Program is to provide a place where students and adults with disabilities can go after their school or day program is over while allowing their family member(s) to complete their day – be that at work or completing afternoon errands or appointments. The family does not have to schedule themselves to rush home to meet a bus. Respite.



In January of 2012, the Center for Disability Services opened an AS/AW program at The Arts Center of the Capital Region on River Street in Troy. Our home base is in the Drawing classroom. As in any such program the participants arrive by bus from their school or program and come together for snack. Right about here is where the difference occurs. The Center has contracted with The Arts Center to include a variety of arts classes and sometimes rental of other specialty rooms in the building to provide a unique arts based experience for the folks who participate. At least three days a week participants are offered classes taught by instructors chosen by The Arts Center with their interests and abilities in mind. Almost from the beginning consumers have taken a Pottery class taught by Bianca DuPuis who owns the Broken Mold across the street. Bianca never seems to run

out of ideas and has taught the participants to throw the clay, score it and use slip to connect the clay, to use texture, to coil, paint and glaze, to use clay beads wrapped in newspaper and placed inside vessels to make noise like a rattle after being fired in the kiln. The skills go on and on. They have made everything from pinch pots to flower pots to wall pockets to Halloween sculptures to wind chimes to a set of dishes and much, much more!

Some of the other classes this group has taken include Photography, Printmaking, Exploratory Arts, Stained Glass, AUMI (Adaptive Use Musical Instruments - <http://deeplisting.org/site/adaptiveuse>), and are about to take video along with photography.

Every week the group rents the Culinary Arts Kitchen for a staffed cooking group with a focus on



adapting recipes consumers suggest to make them healthier for all to enjoy. Although we have some picky eaters, we've made fish sticks from real fish and not from a box, homemade pesto sauce used on pizza with fresh vegetables, low fat alfredo sauce, homemade chicken nuggets and Pumpkin Pie Pop Tarts <http://abc.go.com/shows/the-chew/recipes/Pumpkin-Pie-Pop-Tarts-Catherine-McCord>. We even made The Moosewood Cookbook's Dark Chocolate Pudding using Splenda instead of sugar [http://www.culinate.com/books/collections/all\\_books/Moosewood+Restaurant+Low-Fat+Favorites/Dark+Chocolate+Pudding](http://www.culinate.com/books/collections/all_books/Moosewood+Restaurant+Low-Fat+Favorites/Dark+Chocolate+Pudding). It's always a great moment when the nay sayers who think food comes from



a box or has to be fattening not only enjoy what they've made but ask for more! One of the participants often speaks in a very quiet voice. But on that chocolate pudding day he very loudly asked for more. Since then, when asking him to speak up we call it his "chocolate pudding voice" and the term has followed him back to his day program!

For a while we also rented the dance studio – complete with a beautiful wooden floor and wall mirror for a movement group. The staff member who led this activity is a Dance/Movement Therapist and used this modality to facilitate interaction with two participants who are non-

minimally verbal. The smiles on their faces as they participated are indescribable. Pure joy. As a result these folks have formed a really nice friendship.

So, let's see, Culinary Arts, Visual Arts, Dance/Movement. Arts.

This program is open to students and consumers in the Capital Region (Albany/Troy) who are enrolled in the Medicaid Waiver. Service Coordinators work with Enrollment at the Center for Disability Services to get things started and see if this program is available to the consumer. Step 1 is ALWAYS to come visit us though! If you stop by you'll see a group of happy faces and some silly laughter mixed up with lots of creativity and fun.

For more information contact Elissa Zwiebach at 518-427-2303 or [zwiebach@cfdsny.org](mailto:zwiebach@cfdsny.org).

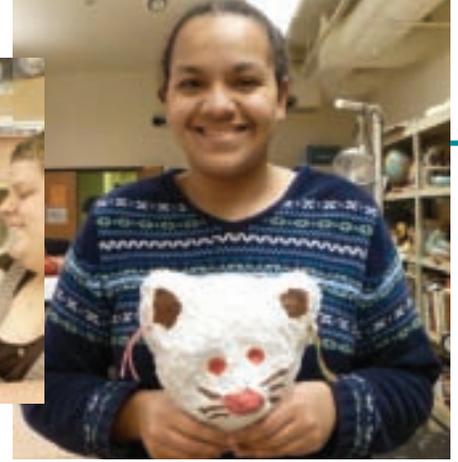
# The Birth of the Center Art Exhibit & Other Artistic Journeys

Since 2007, the Center for Disability Services has sponsored an art exhibit highlighting the creativity and talents of program participants of varying ages and abilities from preschool through senior citizen. Staff exhibits began in 2008 and were incorporated with program participants to create an inclusive exhibit in 2010. As with anything new and widespread (the Center is a very large, diverse, multi-faceted non-profit agency) it was difficult to get the word out and convince people to spend money on art supplies (with very limited budgets) and time on figuring out how to adapt art processes so people could really partake and be successful. I still get questions about "hand-over-hand assistance." We'll get back to that topic.

The original thought was that we have very creative folks without a vehicle to show others what they can do and what is possible. We know incorporating art into education helps

students to learn – besides it's fun! There were opportunities in our "network" through conferences for agencies to exhibit artwork but no representation for the Center. My task was to get the word out, organize, receive the artwork and produce an event. Without boring readers with all the details, this task was accomplished in 2007 for people with disabilities from all parts of the agency – school, adult day programs, residences, respite, you name it! We had judges who "critiqued" the submissions to choose winners in a variety of categories and an Artists Awards Reception in the evening.

That event went well, with our goal of sending artwork to a couple of conferences. We even had one of our pieces (from artist Karen DeVoe) win recognition for top billing on a poster through Cerebral Palsy of New York State affiliates. As with any first time effort, along with the accolades were the new ideas, the "What if next time we...." statements. What about



our staff? Apparently this was not a one time thing. Therefore a committee was formed to add a staff event as well as to repeat the consumer event. Again, much cajoling, paycheck stuffers, meetings to plan, lots of emails, new considerations. In 2008, the Consumer Art Exhibit and the Staff Art Exhibit were very, very different. Separate, and both impressive, but certainly not equal. The big change from 2007 for consumers was that the Awards Reception took place during the day to allow more of the artists to attend the event, something we have continued. This has allowed us to incorporate an artist-in-residence and other highlights including inviting visitors most years to participate in a large spray painting. As I write this one of these beautiful paintings is hanging locally at the Schenectady Jewish Community Center as part of the Capital Capabilities event.

Without walking the reader through each and every year, this is a good place to jump to 2010. Easily that year could have been the end and there would be no article for me to write. Despite many efforts and the proverbial “pulling of teeth” there simply were not enough submissions from consumers or staff to warrant going through with either event. It seemed that if we postponed the date and merged the two we could pull off a respectable exhibit. Long story short, the Center Art Exhibit went on and continues annually in May. We have had artwork travel to the Rensselaer Train Station, Saratoga First Night, Bethlehem Public Library, Troy Night Out, The Arts Center of the Capital Region, Capital Capabilities, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital and the CP of NYS affiliates conference and annual poster contest. In 2010, when we merged the artwork of consumers and staff and stood back to look at the flow of the artwork, it was apparent that this was the way it was meant to be – integrated, inclusionary, together. One might think the point of separation would be apparent, but it never is. The Center’s President & CEO Alan Krafchin described the merging of the two exhibits as “serendipitous” and I couldn’t agree more.

Art is a language we all seem to speak. On a couple of occasions I have been asked to present some ideas to staff in our Langan School. The focus of my presentation is always the idea of “success-oriented” processes. Notice the word “process” and not “project” or “product.” Art is a process, as is any form of communication. When any of us visit a gallery or art museum we look at the artwork and see different things, much the same as when we hear different things in a conversation. We all communicate differently and create differently. People with disabilities require that we think differently when we present them with art materials. Some may not need much from us at all, except perhaps a little direction or step by step instruction or demonstration of what we’re thinking we might be trying to accomplish. Others are completely independent despite whatever we may see as their barrier. They may take

their art-making in a completely different direction than we intended and it’s better! For those who have little physical movement, they rely on us to assist. It’s up to us to provide what they need and nothing more. I’d expect to hear questions like “What color would you like to use?”, “Would you like a new color?” “Do you need my help?” “What shape would you like to make/use?” As for hand-over-hand assistance, the emphasis is on the assistance. We are facilitating movement, not creating our own artwork by using their hand as an extension of our own. I always tell a story of a young man I worked with years ago who was almost always having seizure activity, which caused one of his hands to move on its own. We would help him to draw or paint by putting the implement into his hand, help him hold it but let the movement he had take the colors on their journey while we made sure he watched what was happening. He got so much out of each experience and everything he created was beautiful.

Anyone who has the chance to either visit our annual Center Exhibit or view our artwork in a community venue will see that not all art must “look like something.” However, each piece will certainly speak to you! Most recently, our artwork was on display at The Arts Center of the Capital Region in Troy during November and December 2013. Artist Gretchen Berg is represented on the 2013 Visions of New York poster through CP of NYS affiliates. We have a piece traveling with Capital Capabilities, which was displayed at the Schenectady JCC with more locations to be determined. We’ve just scheduled an exhibit in September 2015 at the Bethlehem Public Library.

Each and every year the quality is amped up! We have learned over the years that it’s not just about the beautiful artwork, but also how you show it. Initially, staff were required to frame and present their work “professionally” but consumers were not. An outgrowth of this integrated exhibit is that all are expected to professionally present each piece at its very best. Our art events include judging. Those judges have included an actual judge, the Honorable Cathryn M. Doyle, as well as many different experts from the art and design world and those involved with people with disabilities. We were lucky enough to have Sandy Onderdonk from Four Corners Frame Shop in Delmar who donated frames to the Center for future use.

As this annual undertaking and the process of art making is a “work in progress,” we welcome any input or words of encouragement and/or advice from readers. For further information, please feel free to contact me, Elissa Zwiebach, at [zwiebach@cfdnsy.org](mailto:zwiebach@cfdnsy.org).

# An Artful Collaboration: Center for Disability Services & The Arts Center of the Capital Region

*Reporters: Dan Scribner, Deana Rorick  
Compiled by: Karen Gandolfo*

Since the fall of 2011, individuals involved in day habilitation programs at the Center for Disability Services have been signing up for and participating in all kinds of visual and creative arts classes at The Arts Center of the Capital Region, located at 265 River Street in Troy.

This has proved to be a wonderful partnership between the Center's Adult Division and the Arts Center whose mission is to "Engage people in the creative experience...We are the pre-eminent program of the arts and creative education, expression and appreciation serving people of all ages, abilities and economic and cultural backgrounds."

With input from Center program participants, each season a new schedule of classes is offered for sign up. Classes are held within the program day and the Center provides transportation to and from The Arts Center from sites around the Capital District.

A list of classes offered includes: pottery, woodworking, mosaics, creative writing, stained glass, jewelry making, healthy cooking, painting/mixed media, drumming and computer music, printmaking, puppet making, mask making, collages and painted silk scarves.

Recently Dan Scribner, a member of the Glenville Day Hab program and frequent participant in classes at The Arts Center had the opportunity to interview three of his classmates about their artistic experiences.

Dan: What classes have you taken and what has been the most enjoyable part of taking classes at The Arts Center?

Jenny: I've taken stained glass, painted scarves, mosaics and pottery classes. I love making purple things, it is my favorite color.

Sarena: I have taken Pottery. Making the clay was my favorite part.

Samara: I've taken photography, mosaics, pottery, cooking and collage making. I enjoyed taking photos in a new and creative way.

Dan: Have you met new people as a result of taking classes?

Jenny: Yes, I've liked meeting all of the art teachers.

Sarena: I got to see someone from school that I haven't seen in years.

Samara: I made new friends with Ali and Sara from (the Center for Disability Services') New Karner Rd. adult day program

Dan: What have you done with the art work you created and what classes would you like to take in the future?

Jenny: I've decorated my room and given some as gifts to my Mom. I would like to take painting next.

Sarena: My pottery is decorating my house. I'd like to take a class in painting.

Samara: I give my art to my Mom. It is upstairs.

Dan also asked the group about how they like the city of Troy. All agreed that they like the city and that it is pretty.

On another occasion Dan sat down and interviewed one of the regular teachers at The Arts Center, Tamara DeMartino. Tamara has taught print making, exploratory art, collage, painting, mosaic and painted silk scarves.

Dan: How did you become an art instructor?

Tamara: I became a teacher out of need but I embrace teaching now. I have been teaching for only four years but have been doing art for 25-30 years and I have a Masters degree in Art.

Dan: What is your favorite medium to work with?

Tamara: Mosaic without a doubt!

Dan: What inspires you when you create your own art?

Tamara: Beauty...I like to make things to show the beauty of them.

Dan: What have you learned from working with individuals with disabilities?

Tamara: That they are way more able than I/people may think. That they are no different than anyone else, and that they will always surprise you.

Dan: What classes would you like to teach in the future?

Tamara: I would like to teach a class in Batik, which involves dyeing fabric. I would like to make a big banner or quilt.

In addition to the opportunity to explore their creativity and make beautiful art at The Arts Center, individuals also have the chance to submit their creations to the annual art show at the Center for Disability Services each spring. Winners of that competition had their work displayed in The Foyer Gallery at The Arts Center of the Capital Region from October 25 – December 21, 2013.

# Shaffer and Wood at the Movies: Laura

Laura is one of our favorite movies. Gene Tierney, at her most exquisite, plays Laura Hunt, a highly-successful New York City advertising executive, murdered in her country home while away for a quiet weekend. The broodingly handsome Dana Andrews plays Mark McPherson, the detective investigating her murder. The story is told in a series of flashbacks, in which all the people who might have had a reason for wanting Laura dead tell Mark everything they know – or so we're led to think – about her.



There is Waldo Lydecker, the much-read high-society journalist, who was instrumental in launching Laura's career. He worships her, unable to even consider that anyone else could be good enough for her. There is Shelby Carpenter, her fiancé, a vain, rather stupid man, who seems barely affected by her passing. And there is Ann Treadwell, her aunt, whose devotion to her niece is nothing but pretense; for she, it turns out, has been carrying on with Laura's fiancé, while supporting his self-indulgent lifestyle.

Mark, meanwhile, becomes obsessed with her, the more he learns of her intelligence, her beauty, and her charm. When it turns out that she is not dead after all, that someone else presumed to be Laura was killed instead, the plot thickens, as they say, until the villain is finally revealed.

A gripping story, one that keeps your attention from start to finish. We give it five stars.

# C-R Center Stars

## *Acting on Dreams*

When the curtain rose for the first time on the actors of C-R Center Stars in 2010, it was the beginning of acting on dreams and making those dreams come true for many individuals in the Center's Adult Services. C-R Center Stars was born through a collaboration between the Center for Disability Services and C-R Productions in Cohoes. Together, C-R Center Stars provides opportunities for the individuals in the Center's Day Programs to participate in the theater arts, including acting, singing, and dancing. Under the creative direction of Tony Rivera of C-R Productions, the program has given individuals with disabilities an outlet in which to express themselves freely without judgment or fear of rejection. It's a chance to be a part of something big, to live out their dream of being an actor or a singer or a dancer or a comedian...and to perform in front of an audience as large as 400 people.

The first production C-R Center Stars put on was an original show titled, "I Am." It was a variety show written and directed by Tony Rivera. The actors involved performed Shakespeare in the park, took the role of their favorite game show host, transformed themselves into superheroes, showed how they could think on their feet with improvisational skits, and sang and danced to their all-time favorite tunes.

Jason Stickle, one of the original members of C-R Center Stars, performed a Michael Jackson inspired

dance that brought the house down. "He's my hero," Jason explained, "he means everything to me." Jason loves being a part of C-R Center Stars. He enjoys being able to share his joy of performing with others. As Jason says, "It feels good! It's nice to perform in front of my parents and friends."



In the show, Jen Pecak wowed the audience with her performance as Juliet, to Matt Calautti's Romeo, in the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet." "It's fun! I can't wait to do it again." The next production that C-R Center Stars put on was Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

This was a fully scripted performance. It was a little bit of a change for some of the actors as they felt the pressure of having to memorize lines. The group showed that they were up for the challenge as they worked hard to memorize their parts.

One of the actors truly got the chance to make his dream come true. Jay Gunderson was able to play the role he was made for: Santa Claus. Jay loves the holiday season and he loves leading others in the singing of Christmas carols. Dressed up like Santa Claus, white beard and all, Jay was able to parade across the stage calling out "Merry Christmas! Ho! Ho! Ho!" At the end of the performance, Jay led the other performers and the audience in a few of his favorite carols. As much as Jay loves being on stage, he also loves being able to watch his performances.

Even before he finishes a show, he asks about when it will be out on DVD.

After these two performances, the popularity of the program had grown in the Center's Adult Programs and there was a great deal of interest from other individuals who wanted the opportunity to be a part of C-R Center Stars.

The next performance, "DREAM," was another original show written and directed by Tony Rivera. It was a variety show about a boy going to sleep and through his dream he meets many interesting and unusual characters. The cast of the performance had more than doubled from the original group to more than 30 actors. The show



gave the performers a chance to live out and act on their dreams. One of the performers in "DREAM," Kate Pucci, says that it's her favorite show. In the show, Kate was able to sing the song "Dream" by one of her favorite singers, Miley Cyrus. Kate loves to perform on stage because she says, "It makes me feel like I can inspire people." Another performer in "DREAM," Lauren Williams, loved the chance to try something that she'd never done before. In the show, Lauren dances with the director, Tony Rivera. In Lauren's words, "It makes me happy."

The next performance C-R Center Stars produced was E.B. White's "Charlotte's Web." This production was a scripted show like "A Christmas Carol." Colleen Russman loved being a part of the group. "I like going to rehearsals and being in shows with my friends." Jason Stickle was a natural when he played the part of Templeton the Rat. "I loved it! It was pretty funny. I like making people laugh."

"A Class Act" was the next performance. This origi-

nal show, created by Tony Rivera, gave the audience a glimpse into some of the exercises actors do on a regular basis during their rehearsals and classes. It included improvisational skits, singing, and even some audience participation. Matt Calautti, who has been a part of C-R Center Stars since its inception, thinks that this is one of his favorite shows. "I loved 'A Class Act.' No script. Just be yourself and have fun with it. Lots of improv. That's the best part. It's a surprise. You never know what's going to happen." Christina Coleman, one of the new members of C-R Center Stars, also loved being a part of this show. She especially enjoyed "singing and clapping in front of the audience." Christina lights up when she talks about singing "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown." "I liked it when the audience sang along with me!"

The most recent C-R Center Stars performance was "Alice in Wonderland – Urban Edition." This unique take on a classic tested everyone's skills. Kim Compton loved being a part of the performance. The fact that she uses a walker to assist with her mobility didn't deter her from taking on the role of one of the runners in the caucus race. Kim says, "I love being a part of C-R Center Stars. I like being with my friends and acting on stage." The title role of Alice was played by Kate Pucci who truly embodied Alice when she was on stage. "Playing the part means a lot to me. I always wanted to play the part like in the Disney movie."

Some of the many benefits which the individuals involved in C-R Center Stars have gained from this program include promoting teamwork, encouraging peer support, trust building, problem solving and most importantly, having fun while taking pride in a job well done. C-R Center Stars began with the goal of acting on dreams. Over the past few years, it has grown to be so much more. For the individuals involved, it's not just a dream come true, it's become their reality.

–Jeremy Tynan and Nancy Champlin