Breaking Ground 109 Arts – March 2022

Cover description: Text on the cover says “Breaking Ground issue 109 – 2022 annual arts issue”. The cover photo shows three dancers on a white stage with low blueish lighting. They are all adults, wearing loose white clothing. One is a young white woman with Down syndrome, short blonde hair and red glasses, raising her hands in a dance movement. Another is a young Black woman with Down syndrome, smiling and appearing to blow a kiss to the crowd watching the performance. A Black man with no visible disabilities stands behind the two of them and smiles at his two fellow dancers. The caption on the inside cover Table of Contents page reads: “Kaylea Dunkin and Keonna Reed joined Shackled Feet

DANCE! for a truly inclusive performance of locally composed opera Steal Away. Read more on pg. 10. Photos by Tiffany Bessire, courtesy of OZ Arts Nashville.”

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*Subscriptions to Breaking Ground are free and available through the Council website. Visit tn.gov/cdd to subscribe or contact us by phone or email with subscription updates or requests, and please include name and mailing or email address. This project was supported in part by grant number 2101TNSCDD, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.*

# Welcome to the 2022 Arts issue of *Breaking Ground*

## Introduction by Lauren Pearcy, Executive Director, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities

Dear readers,

It is an honor for me to write this first note in Breaking Ground as the Council’s new Executive Director. With Wanda Willis’ retirement, our team is starting a new chapter together. A few highlights from the year, thus far, have been a staff retreat that allowed our team to reset together, our February Council meeting when we welcomed three new Governor-appointed members, and bringing on an intern from the Vanderbilt Next Steps inclusive higher education program. We are excited about the future.

As you may know from reading this magazine, the Council created a new 5-year state plan that begins this year. That plan lays out our big-picture goals and how we will meet them between now and 2026. It is based on public input from across Tennessee – your input.

Your input will continue to influence our work as we put the new plan into practice. Please connect with us by replying to our newsletters, connecting with us on social media, or calling our office: 615-532-6615. We can connect you with our members in your communities, too. Together, it’s our job to solve problems and celebrate what’s going right in Tennessee’s disability community.

The annual Breaking Ground arts issue is one way we celebrate our community. Every year, we are blown away by the submissions. To me, it’s the truest window into our community – the way we can see each other exactly how we are inside. Too often in our community, differences in outside expression become barriers. Art shows that our differences are beautiful.

We hope you enjoy these works of art as much as we do. Let us know!

## Introduction by Kim Johnson, Director of Arts Access, Tennessee Arts Commission

The year 2021 was filled with ongoing changes and surprises as we continued to live through a worldwide pandemic. Organizations that serve people with disabilities have risen above numerous challenges to reach people virtually so they can continue to experience and enjoy the arts. To accomplish this, many organizations had to rethink their use of technology to provide virtual programming. Though there were challenges, technology has proven itself as a helpful tool in reaching existing audiences, expanding audiences, and broadening the pool of artists that provide programming. For some organizations, technology helped reach across geographic and physical boundaries to allow

more people to participate in arts activities.

We also saw how powerful the arts could be as a tool in helping people cope with physical and mental health-related issues with a pandemic. Many organizations found ways to address these issues by using arts programming to help people stay connected to their creativity, reduce isolation, and keep engaged in the world. To assist organizations in

doing this, the Tennessee Arts Commission allowed flexibility in funding for groups to move to virtual programming. We opened grants to support creative responses to COVID-19 through the arts. And we distributed federal funding to arts organizations. We wanted to make sure that our work changed to meet the needs of people and nonprofits

throughout Tennessee during the pandemic.

Again, we are grateful for this partnership with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and Borderless Arts Tennessee as we work together to reach people with disabilities. We look forward to moving forward in service to people in Tennessee.

## Introduction by Lori Kissinger, Borderless Arts Tennessee

Borderless Arts Tennessee is honored to be a part of the arts edition of *Breaking Ground*. The arts provide a way for us to communicate our dreams. Communicating our dreams provides a path to pursuing our dreams. Pursuing our dreams leads to places beyond barriers and boundaries. We become borderless.

Thank you, *Breaking Ground*, for this opportunity for creating a place where the communication of dreams may begin.

# My Hands Are My Eyes by Tracy Bettencourt, Owner/Artist of Bettencourt Originals

Note: image descriptions at end of article

My name is Tracy Bettencourt. I am a professional artist and owner of Bettencourt Originals. In my early 30s, I began to lose my eyesight from an eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa. I am now blind. Within the past five years, I began painting using my hands.

I use assistive technology on my iPhone and iPad to identify colors. The paints I use are textured acrylic and forms of puffy paint. My hands are my eyes, and the puffy paint I use allows me to convey my thoughts and feelings onto canvas using tactile lines. I feel that I bring new insight to how art is viewed.

Every day I wake up and live in darkness, yet with my newfound skill of painting, I am able to share my unique perception of the world around me. Painting allows me to convey the unseen beauty of life. My works reflect hope, adversity, love, positivity, strength, and determination. I put my heart, soul, and insight into every piece of artwork. In addition to teaching private workshops, I teach painting at Artlink Clarksville (with 30% of the proceeds from those classes going back to benefit this great nonprofit arts organization).

There will always be a mountain to climb. Yet I strongly feel that no matter what the obstacle, there is light within darkness and therefore, there is hope.

*Tracy Bettencourt, owner/artist of Bettencourt Originals, is an advocate for people with disabilities, former fitness competitor, motivational speaker, and APSU alumni. View her work on her Facebook page at* [*https://www.facebook.com/nuinsight2014*](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/www.facebook.com/nuinsight2014__;!!PRtDf9A!8CjPCOpO76eSWinGZI1242JwS3hihGmNdyQ0GSe5-KRoCFo41EhdCKs9vk8I8RVk$)*. You can contact her at* [*tbettencourt2014@gmail.com*](mailto:tbettencourt2014@gmail.com)*.*

Image descriptions:

1. Photo of Tracy shows her posing beside one of her painting in a gallery and smiling with her hand on her hip. She is a white woman with long blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail wearing dark sunglasses, a black and gold patterned blouse that reveals one shoulder, and holding her white cane beside her.
2. “Spring Snow” by Tracy Bettencourt is a painting of what looks like an old farmhouse surrounded by colorful bushes and large black trees, with snowflakes falling all around.
3. “Journey” by Tracy Bettencourt is a very textured painting of a tree without leaves and many branches. Colors on the tree and in the background are yellows, purples, greens and browns.

# The Shadows of Castille de Magnus: Short story by Josecarlos Fumero

CONTENT WARNING: This story contains mild language and descriptions of violence.

I woke up in my master’s castle, drowsy and sleepy. So I walked through the dining room to the kitchen for a glass of water for my dry throat. But when I walked back to my room, there was a loud crash. I ran to check what crashed through the stained-glass window. It was like a wolf, but bigger. The arms were thin but strong, legs as large as a spear, and its face was covered in a blood-like drool. The thing saw me, and I ran as fast as I could to my room, while the shag furred beast was running behind me.

As soon as the door closed on it, the beast let out a booming howl as loud as a cannon shot in war. My heart slowed down. I was relieved for sure. Later, I walked throughout my room and noticed a letter on the table, picked it up and started to read it.

*“Dear Jonathan, I know you will be asleep when I finish my letter, but I need you to get out as soon as you can because they are coming. I already sent my men and servants to a safe location here in Greece. There is a secret passageway in the castle. Use it as you wish and may the gods help you. Sincerely, Lord Magnus.”*

“What the hell?” I asked myself.

As soon as I finished the letter, I heard another howl, another, and another out the window. I saw five or maybe more of those wolf-like freaks. They were entering the castle. I thought to myself, maybe they're entering here for a feeding ground or a place to rest. I waited for those things to enter to attempt my escape. Five minutes later, they were in. The beasts were feasting on the leftovers of the dining room while I escaped the castle underground. I supposed this was the passage my lord was speaking about. “This is it, my salvation,” I happily smiled to myself.

I climbed out of the cave and ran towards the village, but when I ran, I felt something bite at my leg. And there one of those things was, biting at my leg with powerful jaws and strong fangs, penetrating my fragile skin.

I screamed out loud as its teeth began to tear my leg apart. I tried to kick it in the face as hard as I could, but it didn’t work. I noticed a small knife on the ground. I grabbed it and jammed it into the creature’s left eye. It howled in pain as it let go of my bloody leg. It removed the sanguine knife from its eye and ran away. I sighed in relief. I limped rapidly while I gritted my teeth in pain, as the others were starting to smell the blood on my leg. I hid myself in a dark forest, hiding my pain from the “wolves” that were hunting me down. The beasts were smelling the air, their breaths visible in the cold air. In disappointment, the pack walked away.

In relief, I slowly crawled towards an opening in the woods and made my way out. A group of men were in a carriage traveling the mountainside. I jumped into view, and they stopped to check on me. “What were you doing, little man?” said the captain of the group. “Are you ok?” said the other.

I explained to them as I went into the carriage everything that had happened. “Wow, so you were running away from hungry lycans. What a brave little soul,” cheerly said the medic, as he added ointments and medications to my injured leg. “Yeah,” I shyly expressed myself. “Thank the lord you weren't on Zeus’ hitlist!” the guard laughed. The carriage started up as the horses began to walk towards their destination.

A few months later, we were arriving to Athens. I looked happily towards the bustling town, filled with people doing their everyday activities. But when I looked at them, I felt my hunger growing on the inside, and my eyes slowly turning yellow.

“Hey, you ok?” asked one of the men. “Yeah, I’ll be fine,” I said back to him. “Oh, good, you need to rest, but we’ll book you a visit to a nearby house, ok?”

“Yeah, thanks,” I said. The people from the carriage moved towards the town.

Still, I felt my fingers slowly turning into claws, and my hunger growing.

*I feel...hungry.*

*Author’s bio: My name is Josecarlos Fumero. I am 19 years old. I have autism and was diagnosed at 5 years. I finished high school, and then I moved to Nashville from Puerto Rico last year with my mom and my grandma. They are my support. This is the first short story I wrote when I took a workshop with Mrs. Blair. I never thought I could have the talent to do this. Then I posted it on the Reddit app and received a lot of good comments and I felt so happy. I wrote three more stories until the workshop ended. It was the best workshop ever.*

# Let’s MOVE! By Lauren Beasley Morris, Founder and Executive Director, MOVE Inclusive Dance

Note: image descriptions at end of the article.

MOVE Inclusive Dance is a dance program for people of all abilities in Nashville and Franklin, TN. Our mission is to empower people of all ability levels to learn life skills through movement. Our dance classes at MOVE Inclusive Dance use music and movement to transform students’ lives while providing a warm, inviting environment for all.   
  
MOVE Inclusive Dance offers a variety of classes for all ages. Some types of classes include “Groovy Moves,” “Creative Movement,” and “Ballet/Lyrical.” These classes focus on different aspects of dance such as choreography, ballet, and/or technique. Each class is tailored to what each individual student needs.   
  
Meet Hallan!  
Hallan has been a part of the MOVE Inclusive Dance community since early 2021. Since starting, she has opened up and allowed her personality to show through more each week. She is an incredibly sweet and loving student who always has a positive attitude. Hallan is gentle and always wants to hug others in class around her. As time has passed, Hallan has become more comfortable with dancing and interacting with others more, and dancing bigger than ever. Hallan is in the “Creative Movement” class every Saturday. She began dancing with her mother, Payton, but has now transitioned to dancing with a volunteer called a “dance buddy.”

We asked her mother, Payton, a few questions about how MOVE Inclusive Dance has impacted Hallan:  
  
“Due to COVID-19, Hallan had been without social interaction outside our home for over a year. Her dad and I were starting to see her withdraw. We were very worried about how the lack of interactions would affect her. After a search for special needs activities and groups, I found MOVE Inclusive Dance. She was very shy and slow to warm up to at first, but now she really enjoys our Saturday mornings in dance class. She has peers to interact with and loves her class, the dance room, and the instructors. Hallan now asks to give a big hug to her dance partner and instructor after every class (sometimes before and during class too),” Payton said.   
  
We asked Payton if she has seen any specific changes in Hallan since attending MOVE Inclusive Dance. She responded: “Hallan has developed a joy for music and movement. She now wants to listen to different types of music. When she hears a favorite song, she wants to hold hands, spin in a circle, and jump along. Her favorite dance partner is her little brother. Hallan has also started listening for rhythmic patterns. She will clap, tap, and nod her head along to the pattern.”   
  
We asked if Hallan has met any goals during her time at MOVE Inclusive Dance. “Hallan has been able to improve her attention span, level of focus, retention, and social interaction skills since attending MOVE. Hallan has progressed in her physical therapy goals too. Her therapists have been impressed by her ability to follow the exercises and willingness to try.”  
  
Hallan has been a wonderful asset to the MOVE family. We have seen her grow and flourish into a young girl with added confidence and increased social interaction skills. We can’t wait to see what Hallan accomplishes next!   
  
Feeling ready to dance?

Check out our website at [www.moveinclusivedance.com](https://urldefense.com/v3/__http:/www.moveinclusivedance.com__;!!PRtDf9A!5iZluqO44e85DnuqyUrO9ffLZ9WjSizAkOSCOy8E-GMgB5UnoWNz2eiFxkJq98Ao$) to find the location and class right for you! Email Lauren Morris at [lauren@moveinclusivedance.com](mailto:lauren@moveinclusivedance.com) with any questions you may have. Don’t forget to check out our Facebook and Instagram pages too: @moveinclusivedance!

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Credit for all photos is Sarina Kurrimbukus.

1. Caption: Dance student Saniya Rose (front) and volunteers perform a ribbon dance at a 2021 Recital at the Zoo. Description: a young Black girl is on a stage with a few other dancers behind her, and all of the dancers are waving colorful ribbons on sticks in the air with their arms raised. They are all wearing matching shirts with the “MOVE” dance program logo that say “2021 Recital”.
2. Caption: Hallan has grown in confidence and met new goals through her time at MOVE Inclusive Dance. Description: A young Black girl wearing pink glasses and a “2021 recital” T-shirt poses smiling while holding a bouquet of flowers.
3. Sisters Christina and Qing Quing participate together at MOVE Inclusive Dance. Description: A young Black girl in a wheelchair wearing a paper crowd and “2021 recital” shirt is hugged from the side by her sister, a young Asian girl with a huge smile.
4. Caption: Dancer Rachel and volunteer Morgan wait to perform at the 2021 Recital at the Zoo. Description: Two young white women lean together for a photo in matching black T-shirts for the recital. One of the women has Down syndrome, both are also wearing colorful bandanas.

## Sidebar: All-Access Inclusion Network by Blaire Donnelly-Mason, Program Manager, Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD)

The All-Access Inclusion Network (AAIN) is a network of arts, education, athletic, and entertainment organizations. The network promotes awareness, accessibility, and true inclusion of people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

The AAIN supports members of the network through consulting, helping organizations develop goals and inclusive supports, and training staff. Our arts organization partners have created many social supports (i.e., social stories, story boards, tip sheets, and modified maps) to make environments more predictable. That can affect whether a person has a positive or successful visit to their organizations. By having these kinds of supports, they communicate to their community that all people are valued and can be included.

Families and caregivers can visit AAIN partners and know the staff have completed trainings on making their organization more understanding and welcoming to the entire community they serve, including people with disabilities. AAIN partners are creating a culture shift within their organization that values and respects neurodiversity. They work towards that culture shift in lots of ways, including:

* Creating social supports
* Inclusive hiring practices
* Training their staff
* Making changes to make physical spaces more accessible, sensory-friendly, and welcoming
* Asking for ongoing feedback from visitors with disabilities and families

Many community organizations want to be more inclusive, but they don’t know where or how to start. An open conversation with community members is a great way to learn about the needs of the community. The AAIN has online trainings that are available to all community organizations and community members. These trainings can help interested organizations learn more about neurodiversity and first steps to shifting the culture at an organization to be more inclusive.

For those interested in learning more, the AAIN website ([https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/triad/cei-AAIN/](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/vkc.vumc.org/vkc/triad/cei-AAIN/__;!!PRtDf9A!6sUDax8MmXRg5SsmDfLI6Ei63g1xteShRz12w7T06wDiuKmB307RaRHZnQW_vg06$)) is a great place to start. We also encourage reaching out to the AAIN to learn more about how organizations partner with the AAIN and how to begin this collaborative journey.

# Fine Art Selections

## Yoga Girl – Augie Collier

Born and raised in Nashville, Augie Collier selects the medium that he feels best fits the personality of the person he portrays. He works confidently in acrylics, oil, charcoal and/or pastels to capture the individual’s unique character.

Description: A detailed sketch of a young Black woman doing a complicated yoga position with her entire body in the air, balancing on her forearms that are on the ground. Her legs are bent behind her body up in the air to allow her feet to touch her head. Her muscles and limbs are drawn with black charcoal. She’s wearing black athletic clothes and her hair pulled back in braids in a bun. The sketch of her body is surrounded by bright yellow colors that highlight her figure.

## Tennessee Suffragette — Kara Lockmiller

Kara Lockmiller is a native to Knoxville and an artist. She paints musicians and other topics with help from her chromesthesia and bipolar disorder.

Description: a mixed media collage in a muted color palette of tans, browns and dark blues. The collage shows several painted faces and bodies of women, a city block with buildings a taxi on the street, and old papers and letters. Papers featured include a newspaper headline titled “The Suffragette”, an aged envelope with a stamp and cursive script, a handwritten letter, and a newspaper clipping that reads “Ratification of federal suffrage amendment is completed today.” The women are wearing hairstyles and clothes of the 1920s.

## Dreaming of the Beach — LeAnn Wilson

LeAnn Wilson has been painting for about 11 years and says that it is very relaxing and enjoyable.

Description: A calm beach scene with 3 sailboats shown on the peaceful ocean with sand and palm trees framing the ocean view. Birds fly over the sea in a sunset colored sky.

## Snapshot — Clara Thorsen

Clara Thorsen is a freshman at Hillsboro High School in Nashville. She has epilepsy, dyslexia, celiac disease, and is gifted. She loves to draw because it can help people understand and realize the beauty in the world.

Description: An intense and detailed drawing of a young man’s face. He has a serious expression, tousled short black hair, and piercing green eyes.

## Wish Fish — Hope McKee

Hope McKee shared, "As a disabled artist, my art has become my voice. I use a variety of colors and sweeping strokes to invoke feelings of joy and comfort; after all, my name is Hope."

Description: A painting in the style of a classic Japanese print. A tall slender woman in an orange and pink flowing kimono is shown from the back, standing facing a body of water at night with the moon and stars in the background. The water has pink flowers floating in it and a red pagoda stands in front of the moon. A large orange fish is leaping out above the water in front of the woman.

## Opening Night — Morgan Vice

Morgan Vice is 28 years old and a fan of ALL things "circus."

Description: A bright red and white striped circus tent on a starry night features a yellow flag waving at its peak with the artist’s initials, M.V.

## Grandma’s Spirit — Rainbow Mosho

Rainbow Mosho was born in Athens, Greece in 2008. In 2020, she created the COVID-19 Art series to express with bright colors all about family love, the discovery of life and death, handling PTSD, the greater meaning of family, and deep wisdom for a then-12-year-old with autism. Her art has been exhibited in Tennessee and Japan. Her creation "Afro Power" won 3rd Prize in the Fly Your Flag contest.

Description: A simply drawn but stylized large bright yellow bird is the central feature of the painting, spreading its wings across the width of the piece. In its talons, it is lifting a woman in a purple dress with white hair, whose eyes are closed. Bright and dark blue lines frame the background of the painting, appearing to shoot out around the two figures.

## Head Fakes — Arianna Leggs

Arianna Leggs lives in Nashville, TN and recently graduated from Tennessee State University with a B.S. in Art. She enjoys expressing her struggles as an African American female with autism through art. She wants to pursue entrepreneurship and print her artwork on T-shirts and memorabilia, with hopes of helping children like her through art therapy.

Description: A painting of a young Black woman seated cross-legged on the grassy ground facing away from the viewer, wearing blue jean short and a blue shirt. Her hair is braided and curly and long. She is staring at a sunset-colored sky and sparkling bubbles that are all around her. The bubbles have words in them, including the words “neurodivergent”, “stimming”, “transitions”, “meltdowns”, “impulsive”, “perfectionist”, “savant” and “high functioning/low functioning.” Many of the same words are also written in small letters on the girl’s shirt around the edges of her silhouette.

## Joy — Deborah Hanson

Deborah Hanson lives in Tullahoma, TN. She explores weaving with yarn, pieces of plants, stones, and wire in dimensional artwork. She started her use of art for mental health recovery making Zentangle designs. This led to other artwork focusing attention on small areas to incorporate in one artwork. She has found that using paint and alcohol on tile has endless variations and beautiful results, as seen in “Joy.”

Description: An abstract piece that shows watery splotches of varying sizes and colors and shapes overlapping with each other.

## Stephanie – Anime — Havah Ruth Anovitz

Havah Ruth Anovitz is a 22-year-old web design major at Pellissippi State Community College. Havah loves writing and drawing and all things Harry Potter.

Description: A simple pen or marker sketch of the outline of a girl’s face in the style of many anime drawings. She has yellow hair in a side ponytail and large black eyes and a small smile.

## Kind of Blue — Dave Rogers

Dave Rogers is a disabled veteran artist whose work reflects his collective studies of the cultures he has visited through the military and afterwards.

Description: A painting of jazz musician Miles Davis playing his trumpet. The painting shows Miles in a detailed sketch of bold lines and shades of blues. He is against a background with various patterns of orange and greens and yellows. Lines and shapes emerge from the figure of the trumpet that look like small tree limbs and buds.

## Family – We Are All Different Colors – Edward Abou-Zeid

Edward Abou-Zeid is a 9-year-old boy with autism spectrum disorder. He likes to play piano, do math and talk about video games and superheroes. His favorite painting medium is acrylic pouring.

Description: An abstract piece that shows swirls of colors of dark gold, bronze, grays, black, and a few places of bright blue and bright pink.

## A Little Bit of Me — Rhett Stephens

Rhett Stephens lives in Nolensville, TN. He is a photographer in the AbleVoices program.

Description: This photo shows the reflection of a white young man taking a photo with a camera in the window of a coffee shop. In the center of the photo there is a barista at the coffee counter preparing a drink but around the image of what is inside the shop is the photographer’s reflection while he is concentrating on taking the digital photo.

# Steal Away: Soul Connection Through Dance and Music by Shabaz Ujima

*Image descriptions at the end of the article.*

I am a native Nashvillian as well as a dancer, teacher, choreographer, and activist. I founded Shackled Feet DANCE! as a means to share the stories of those who are voiceless and to give space for people to reconnect with the power of dance, movement, and creativity.

I was approached by Dave Ragland, a local composer, about providing the element of movement to his opera, *Steal Away*. I knew that I wanted to create a world on stage that reflected our whole community. While speaking with one of the elder dancers in the cast, she mentioned that we didn’t have the perspective of those with disabilities. I immediately reached out Sarah Edwards of Friend’s Life (note below) to see how we could collaborate! With great enthusiasm, Sarah and the Friend’s Life team reached out to their brilliant artists and we assembled a dynamic cast.

Everyone from the entire cast was blown away and inspired by their passion and generosity. We were all one on stage, despite differences in our age, color, and physical and mental abilities. Our synergy together created an experience that was heartfelt and that touched the deepest parts of the soul. It was what we ALL needed during these times of division.

In the words of the legendary choreographer Alvin Ailey, I learned that “Dance is for the people and should be given back to the people.” Dance and art connect us all through spirit and that connection goes beyond what divides us.

To view the full production, visit: ozartsnashville.org/steal-away/

*Note: Friend’s Life Community is a Nashville center that offers opportunities for teenagers and adults with disabilities to develop socially, grow personally, and enjoy community as they experience life together. Programs include Service Learning, Life Skills, and Advocacy through the Arts.*

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Photo credit for all images: Tiffany Bessire, courtesy of OZ Arts Nashville

* Photo 1: 3 dancers, two men and a woman, are shown from the side standing in a row in the midst of performing. The woman is a young woman with Down syndrome with short cropped blonde hair, a loose white blouse, and a long flowing purple skirt. The men on either side of her are shirtless and wearing loose flowing yellow pants.
* Photo 2 - The main large photo of the article show Friend’s Life participants and dancers Kaylea Dunkin and Keonna Reed are shown standing side by side centerstage with their arms spread out. They are wearing loose and flowing white clothing in front of a white backdrop. Behind them in the shadows you can see a flute player playing the music they are dancing to. Kaylea is a white young woman with Down syndrome with short blonde hair and glasses. Keonna is a Black young woman with Down syndrome with short black hair and a big smile.
* Photo 3- Kaylea and Keonna stand facing each other with the arms up in the air, mid-dance.
* Photo 4 – An ensemble of dancers is dressed in bright yellow and pink flowing clothes and are in motion on stage with blue lighting and white backdrops.
* Photo 5: A cast photo shows a very diverse group of about a dozen dancers posing together in the performance attire, mostly white and tan clothing.
* Photo 6: Photo from backstage framed by curtains show the two Friend’s Life dancers on stage with raised arms.

# Fine Art part 2

## Barn Owl — David C. Duncan

David C. Duncan is originally from Columbia, TN and has been creating art his entire life. In 2006, through counseling for his mental health, David was introduced to HAPI (Healing Arts Project, Inc.) by his counselor. David has been creating art as an independent artist ever since. When asked how art makes him feel, David replied, “Art is a form of communication with a calming effect on the mind. When I am creating, I feel like I am on another planet. As I concentrate on my art, it is like it is just me and my ideas, and I watch them come to life."

Description: A colored pencil sketch of an owl flying in front of some trees. The lines of the trees and bushes in the background are all very soft in a way that suggests they are in motion, blowing in the wind. The owl is draw with more detail in its brown and white and gray feathers.

## Deer at Bowie Nature Park — Alyssa Ray

Alyssa Ray of Franklin, TN enjoys participating in many fine arts, including photography with AbleVoices and performing arts with Backlight Productions. She won two ribbons for her photography, a first and a third, at the 2021 Williamson County Fair.

Description: A deer is curled up at the base on a tree in a forest, surrounded by foliage. The deer looks right at the camera.

## Fall Waterfall — Christy Wells-Reece

Christy Wells-Reece is a graduate of the Council's Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute class of 2001. She is a mother of 2 grown sons, and loves photography, crocheting, and being creative in other ways.

Description: A bubbling waterfall cascades down many rocks with fall leaves covering the banks around the stream.

## African Habitat — Barbara Shirley

Barbara Shirley is continually trying new combinations of different materials for her unique approach to artistic expression. Developing her own style of artwork over many years results in a variety of dimensional work that continues to bring pleasure to the viewer. She says her creative work is satisfying and calming.

Description: Painting shows a full grown giraffe and a smaller younger giraffe standing side by side amongst some trees in front of a small body of water.

## East Tennessee Sunset — Houston Vandergriff

Houston Vandergriff is a 23-year-old photographer with Down syndrome.

Description: A photo of the sun setting on a body of water with a wooden dock emerging from the bank on one side and hills and forests in the background on the other side of the water.

## Master of Cinema — Jalyn Weston

Jalyn Weston is an 18-year-old artist from the little town of Sweetwater, Tennessee, who is currently attending his second year at Cleveland State Community College to acquire a degree in Fine Arts. He plans to move on to a four-year school by the fall. He continues to make a broad spectrum of pieces, trying to move more and more out of his comfort zone. He recently made the transition from doing art on any paper to digital pieces made on his tablet or smartphone. Of course, he still tries to pick up a brush or lead pencil and pen every now and then.

Description: Artwork showing the face of film director Stephen Spielberg. He is shown with his head tiled to the side, looking off to the side. He has short black and gray hair, a gray goatee, black glasses and a purple blazer and bowtie.

# Bringing Theatre to All by Brooks Clark, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Office of Communications & Marketing

Image description at end of article.

About five years ago, the University of Tennessee Knoxville’s [Clarence Brown Theatre](https://clarencebrowntheatre.com/) (CBT) started an effort to increase its community activities with underserved communities and families. This included the Deaf and hard of hearing, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Theatre is about community,” said Tom Cervone, managing director of the CBT. “Throughout our history, community has been our driving force, and we continue to expand thoughtful engagement with the greater Knoxville area every year.”

A recent performance of A Christmas Carol included Deaf Night at the Theatre, a barrier-free experience for members of the hard-of-hearing and Deaf community. The CBT provides this kind of experience for selected performances throughout the season. These performances included:

* American Sign Language interpreters at the box office, concession stand, and usher stations.
* Up to four interpreters signing during the show.

“We had 55 kids and families in attendance,” said Cervone. “It was a tremendous success.”

The CBT has also invested in sensory boxes with:

* noise reducing headphones,
* light-blocking glasses,
* and fidget items.

These boxes are for our community members on the autism spectrum and can be checked out at the box office.

To make the theatre space welcoming for all, staff have had training to better equip our volunteer ushers to be more accommodating. We include a note to patrons in the playbill, asking them to help us make the theatre a place where all can be themselves. That may include more movement, sounds, and conversation happening during the production. “It’s important to us that theatre be a place where we can all gather together and celebrate life in all its complexities,” said Hana Sherman, who serves as the theatre’s Grants, Outreach and Education Manager.

Three years ago, the CBT became the first professional theatre in Tennessee to offer in-house open captioning. This has allowed patrons who experience hearing loss to still enjoy the theatre.

“A $10,000 grant from the Alliance of Women Philanthropists enabled us to buy the equipment and pay for the training for us to use it,” said Cervone, “so we can create the captioning in-house. Our goal is to break down the barriers and make theatre more accessible to everyone.”

As one CBT patron shared, “I have attended CBT for years; but as a hard-of-hearing adult, I always ‘missed’ things. However, I enjoy live plays so much that I’ve continued to attend CBT anyway. Having the open captioning turned the CBT from a great to an exceptional experience for me!”

Hana Sherman says, “There are a lot of ways, even little adjustments, we can do to make the theatre a more accessible place. We are learning new things every day and hope to continue conversations with our community to learn ways we can improve their experience.”

*Brooks Clark writes for the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Office of Communications & Marketing. Born in Nashville, he grew up in Washington, D.C., and has lived in Knoxville since 1988.*

For questions about accessibility at CBT, contact House Manager David Ratliff at [housemanager@utk.edu](mailto:housemanager@utk.edu) or call the Box Office at (865) 974-5161. Learn more at <https://clarencebrowntheatre.com/accessibility/>.

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* Image Caption: Interpreters at Deaf Night at the Theatre. Description: 3 young women wearing all black pose together and smile for a photo while signing in sign language “I love you.”
* Caption: David Kortemeier and Katy Wolfe, in Clarence Brown Theatre’s production of *A Christmas Carol*. Captions are visible at the front of the stage. Photo by Natasha Koetsch

# Honest Directions for Wheelchair Users: Essay by Stacy J. Estep

First of all, you should know that the shortest distance between two points is rarely a straight line. Here’s the truth: for you, going out of the way will often be the only way.

Be prepared to discover that the sidewalk you’re on has collapsed into a pothole. You can’t step over or around it, so you’ll have to go back the way you came until you find a ramp that’s not blocked by a scooter that someone couldn’t bother to park properly. Cross the street there, go past where you were trying to go, cross back to the side of the street where you started, and continue.

Your arms may be strong, but sometimes they’re no match for the gravity that wants to roll you backwards. To reach a destination that’s just one block west but up a steep hill, your only safe option is to stay on the more gradual slopes by going two blocks north, then one block west, and two blocks south.

Maybe you’ll decide to take a bus. That’s fine, but don’t bother considering where you want to sit. There’s only one spot designated for you, and if it happens to be occupied by another wheelchair already, you’ll have to wait for the next bus, anyway.

Let’s talk about subways. When you get off the train, you might find that you can’t get out of the station because the elevator on your platform is broken. Here’s your workaround: wait for another train to arrive, and when its doors open, quickly dash into and across the car before they close again. When you come out onto the opposite platform, use the elevator on that side. Hopefully that one’s working, and you’ll be able to get aboveground and actually leave the station.

Never, ever run late. All of this takes extra time, so plan ahead for that.

In an office building, if you think you’ll need to use the restroom at some point, don’t wait until your bladder is full, because you might have to wait for the elevator. There’s probably only one accessible stall on your floor, and it’s probably occupied by someone who could have used any of the other stalls, which are all empty.

Any time you take a tour, assume at some point you’ll get separated from the group and miss part of the presentation when the guide leads everyone else up a flight of stairs and you have to go search for an elevator. Be aware that you’ll still have to pay full price, though.

In case of fire, sit at the top of the stairwell and wait for some burly strangers to find you and carry you to safety.

When strolling back from lunch with your co-workers, prepare to cut your conversation short. They’ll be turning right to use the nearest door, which is across the grass and up a flight of stairs. You’ll need to turn left and follow the sidewalk to the ground-level door at the far end of the building.

Even when the most direct way is accessible, it’s not necessarily the fastest. If it’s a route with a lot of pedestrians, be aware that some of them will stop you to ask if you need help, and even when you tell them that you don’t, they might not believe you, and you’ll have to say it again (but super nicely, so they won’t cuss you out for refusing their kindness), and after this happens half a dozen times, it’s really just quicker and less draining to go the longer, less trafficked way where fewer people will notice you.

If someone ever asks you how far away something is, tell them you’re not sure, but that it’s probably closer for them than for you.

*Stacy J. Estep lives and writes in East Tennessee, where she has been known to spend a hot summer day doing the Cades Cove Loop in her manual wheelchair.*

# Conquering the Beyond: Poem by Erica McMurray

I blinked my eyes in the white

Taking in such a sight

The restraint rubbed into my skin

It was then the fight began within

I bounced from hospital to hospital

My moods are so brittle

The voices in my head

Even follow me to bed

The whispers have corrupted my life

Piercing like a knife

Things I see don't exist

While my mind is in a mist

Then I had shock treatment

Everyone thought it was an achievement

It knocked my memories away

And left me with nothing to say

The voices are always whispering

Such anger and bickering

I have found ways to cope

And I cling to hope

The doctors all agree that I'm improving

With that they are approving

I fight many battles

As the war unravels

I continue a war that is beyond

And with help of others I bond

With hallucinations I fight

Attempting to find the light

These choices have introduced me to opportunities that open doors

Allowing a broken mind that soars

Those things heard and those unseen

Will NOT be controlling me

And with all being so

I will conquer my foes

I am a Veteran disabled by voices

I have been given a life of many choices

*Erica McMurray is a Teapot Diplomat who participates with Borderless Arts TN. This poem reflects on her struggles in life.*

# Inspired by the Masters: A Fresh View of Fashion History By Alexandra Sargent Capps, Senior Lecturer of Theatre, Costume Designer & Costume Shop Manager, Vanderbilt University

Image descriptions at end of article.

Dynamic, inclusive classrooms form when all students contribute their skills, ideas, and interpretation of the subject matter. In Spring 2021, I had two students from Next Steps at Vanderbilt University (an inclusive higher education program), Rachel Sarubbi and Kristi VanWulven, in my History of Fashioncourse. Throughout the semester, I incorporated their visual and written interpretations of fashion history into the main class presentations. Their expressive work inspired the rest of the class to generate personalized, creative ideas and projects.

Rachel produced 26 drawings which serve as a broad visual overview of Western fashion history. Rachel clearly depicts her subject matter in an identifiable artistic drawing style, which is energetic, accurate, and distinctive. Rachel’s drawings of iconic, historic masterworks demonstrated to the other students that applying one’s personal, contemporary style in creating projects can bring classical works to life and give them renewed relevance.

Kristi researched and wrote informative, relevant text about the original works of art. Kristi’s text provides essential background for and context to Rachel’s drawings. Rachel and Kristi’s project added a colorful, fun, and engaging educational dimension to our classroom.

I love that this project represents the collaborative work of two Next Steps students. Their individual efforts elevate the other’s work. Together, they accomplished a large-scale class project that educates us about fashion history and is artistically inspiring.

## Interviewing Rachel Sarubbi

Rachel Sarubbi, a native of Nashville, TN, is a second-year student in Vanderbilt’s Next Steps inclusive higher education program.

“These drawings are my interpretation of famous works of art. I created them as my contribution to our class Power Point presentations. I hope my drawings demonstrate how beautiful works of art can inspire all of us in discovering creative means of self-expression. During the semester, I produced twenty-six drawings that represent an overview of western fashion history, from ancient Rome to the present day.

My process included looking at the original works, drawing them in pencil, and then I chose my colors. Each drawing took me a few hours to complete. I was very careful to get every detail from the original work onto my paper before I stared coloring. I draw what I see.

My art materials for these drawings are white paper, pencils, and Sharpie markers. I have worked in watercolor paints, markers, clay, and wood sculpting.”

**Interview with Rachel**

1. What did you enjoy about the class? - I enjoyed that I copied pictures for my history of fashion class by tracing, coloring them, and then sharing them with the teacher and the class.
2. What did you learn in the class? - I learned how clothes are made and how and why they change over the years.
3. What was your process in choosing which historic paintings to draw? - Some of my drawings were assigned to me and some I picked for myself. My process of choosing them was not hard and there were some I love. I usually picked the pictures to draw that had a lot of color.

## Interviewing Kristi VanWulven

Kristi VanWulven, a native of Nashville, Tenn., is a 2021 graduate from the Next Steps Program.

“I enjoyed working on this project with and getting to know Next Steps student Rachel Sarubbi. I think Rachel’s drawings are amazingly beautiful. Rachel’s drawings were based on topics in the spring History of Fashion class at Vanderbilt University. My process involved working with my tutor Alexa many afternoons. I wrote information about the paintings that I liked reading and learning about. This project helped me to improve my writing skills.”

**Interview with Kristi**

1. What did you enjoy about the class? - I enjoyed learning about the different topics of the history of fashion and about the different fabrics.
2. What did you enjoy about writing the descriptions of the original artwork? - I enjoyed searching online to find the text information about different people based on the drawings Rachel sketched.
3. What did you learn from writing these descriptions? - I learned about the history and the different types of clothing and fabrics of the people in the original artwork. My VU tutor ambassador, Alexa, helped me find the best sources for the information.
4. Why do you take pride in this accomplishment with another Next Steps student? - I took pride in the accomplishment of this project with another Next Steps student because it shows other Vanderbilt students what amazing talents and skills we have to share.

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Accompanying images to this article are combinations of an original historic artwork, the imitation version created by Rachel Surubbi, and descriptions of the work written by Kristi vanWulven. Each composite includes 2 original works and Rachel’s imitation and Kristi’s narratives.

* Composite 1: First original artwork is titled “Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington, a 1770s fop, in *The Relapse* by John Vanbrugh, circa 1700-1725, engraving.” The original and Rachel’s version are shown together. Text reads “During the 1770s, the word fop described a man who had more feminine qualities including a love for finery and fashion, expressed through his clothing and demeanor. Second original artwork is titled “Elisabeth Louise Vigee Le Brun; *Marie Antoinette in a chemise dress*, 1783, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art.” Text reads “Marie Antoinette, portrayed arranging flowers, wears a style of dress called the robe en chemise which represents two sins. First, it was made of cotton muslin and not French Lyonnaise silk, which was considered unpatriotic. Second, it was considered too relaxed and informal a garment for a French queen.”
* Composite 2: First work: Jan van Eyck, The *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak panel, National Gallery, London. Text reads: “The woman’s gown, including the sleeves, was trimmed with ermine fur. A personal maid was needed to hold the garment off the ground. The man (in the painting) wears a beaver hat and a velvet huke, open at the sides, lined with fur. The clothes and absence of ostentatious gold jewelry place the couple in the painting among the wealthy citizens of Bruges, though not in the top rank.” Second artwork: Sandro Botticelli, *La Primavera* (Spring), circa 1482, tempera on canvas, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Rachel’s imitation is a portrait of just one of the figures in the painting. Text reads “Botticelli depicts the progress of spring from right to left. Above the central Roman goddess Venus is her son, a blind-folded cupid. All the way on the left is Mercury, the god of the month of May. To the right of Mercury are the ‘Three Graces”, representing the feminine virtues Chastity, Beauty and Love. On the right side, Zephrus, the west wind, is about to take a nymph named Chloris. They then transform into Flora, the spring goddess.”
* Third composite: First artwork: Francois Boucher, *Portrait of the Marquise de Pompadour*¸ 1757, oil on canvas, Wallace Collection, London. Text reads: “The portrait portrays Madame de Pompadour, mistress and confidante of Louis XV as she wants to be seen: a symbol of music, literature, the fine arts and politics. It is a part of the femme d’espirit, which means women of culture and learning. Her elegant blue silk dress adorned with roses, ruffles and ribbons shows her femininity and good taste. Second artwork: Gustaf Lundberg, *Portrait of Francois Boucher*, 1741, oil on canvas, Musee de Louvre, Paris. Text reads: “This portrait is of Francois Boucher, the most celebrated French painter of the 18th century. He specialized in the Rococco style, as shown in this painting. He sports pastel colors, a powdered wig, velvet coat, lace cuffs at his wrists, and a lace jabot at his neck.”

## Back cover: “Fall Flower” – Joey McNinch

Joey McNinch is 16 years old, has autism and is from Mount Juliet. Joey enjoys taking photos with his iPad.

Description: A drawing with black, orange, dark red and bright red markers of a pattern of flowers outlined by hexagons.

## Back cover: “Fanciful Fish” - Laura Hudson

Laura Hudson uses her imagination creating detailed, colorful pictures featuring plants, flowers, and birds in lush natural setting.  She portrays people expressing themselves and having a good time.  Laura says making art is calming.  She wants others to enjoy her art, which she says is a gift from God.

Description: A very intricately patterned spotted and striped fish of pink, orange, blue and white colors. The drawing is very detailed with each part of the fish’s body and space around it showing many different styles and patterns like a mosaic.