

RAP Sheet

The Latest in Disability Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Practice

Fall Issue 2009

EXPRESS YOURSELF



THE POWER OF MUSIC

By Michael Skinner

Music has a profound way of touching us. Music has given me great joy, hope, and healing. Music has been a lifesaver and that is not something I say lightly. I am forever grateful for its gift. Music continues to help me heal from an abusive childhood that left me with post-traumatic stress, depression, mild brain injury, and serious back injuries.

I was born in Boston, the oldest of five children. When I was six, my family moved to the small town of Billerica. It was a hard life. My parents were cruel and abusive in just about every way one can imagine. They and several of their friends should have been arrested and jailed for what they did to children. They were never caught and my siblings and I have paid a terrible price for that abuse. Two of my brothers committed suicide, something that still haunts me.

Thankfully, for me there was music. As a young boy it gave me the greatest joy to just sit and listen to someone singing on the radio or TV. My friend's dad played the guitar and would sing all of his

favorite country and western songs for us. I was mesmerized just listening to him play. I thought how great it would be if I could do that myself, but I didn't believe it was possible. My parents always made fun of me when they heard me singing along to a record or the radio and told me how terrible I sounded.

Just before my tenth birthday there came a magical moment
(Continued on next page)

Sandra Patient



Guitarist and songwriter, Michael Skinner

Welcome to the Fall Issue of the Rap Sheet. The desire for self-expression is part of what makes us fully human. In this issue we look at the passion and commitment that individuals with disabilities bring to the creative process. We hope that their stories will inspire you to begin your own creative journey.

SUSAN COVERT, EDITOR

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY THE

DISABILITIES RIGHTS CENTER, INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY, AND NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

IN MEMORIAM

This issue of the Rap sheet is dedicated to the memory of Hazel Savage, who died in August at her home in Concord. Hazel was a published poet and a member of the International Society of Poets. One of her poems, "I Am Alone" was published in the summer 2006 edition of the Rap Sheet.

Hazel loved doing volunteer work at local nursing homes and thrift stores. She was a member of the Abundant Life Ministries Church of God in Christ. She loved her cat, Bandit, and enjoyed singing and dancing.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Concord Peer Support, LRCAB Corner Bridge, Concord, 328 Union Ave; or P.O. box 304, Laconia 03246.



Julia Freeman-Woolpert

Hazel Savage

(Cover story continued)

that changed my life. I watched the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show and was awestruck. I was so excited and believed I could learn to play the guitar and sing just like them. My excitement brought more ridicule and scorn from my parents. Again my hopes were crushed.

Still, music helped me to persevere. The simple act of listening to the radio kept my mind off the things that hurt. Petula Clark's singing "Downtown" helped me keep my sanity. Listening also brought me a great epiphany. When I listened I would tap along to songs and realized that I could anticipate what the drummer would do next. Ah Ha, this was it. I could be a drummer! I set about teaching myself how to play the drums; only this time I didn't share my dream with my parents.

Learning to drum gave me the opportunity to join a local rock band and perform at parties and dances. We won several Battle of the Bands contests. By the time I was sixteen, I was playing regularly in nightclubs and outside concerts. It was my greatest joy to say I was a professional musician. I toured Great Britain for two years [1976 -77] with American Train, a very successful hard rock band. I lived in Liverpool the home of my heroes, the Beatles, and I played in many of the same venues where they performed. Words cannot describe what this experience did for me.

When I returned to Boston I continued to play throughout New England and New York. Life was good. I went into the business side of music working as a manager and

talent agent. The business was successful and I was able to support my own family, a wife and five daughters. I still played with a band on the weekends. I had it all, but the feelings and memories from my childhood came flooding back. Post traumatic stress and major depression laid me low. I lost everything.

I had known abuse as a child and as a teenager. Now I learned just how devastating the label of "mentally ill" could be. Even harder, music only sounded like noise to me now. I was unable to play the drums or listen to music and my depression got worse. Eventually, music had its way and the healing gifts returned. I decided to learn to play the guitar, sing, and write songs. Again my dream was met with ridicule. My wife [soon to be ex-wife] made fun of the idea and so did several of my mental health providers. They let me know that I would always be "mentally ill" and unable to work. The best I could hope for would be to volunteer in a library music department for a few hours a week.

I am happy to say that I didn't listen to them. I learned to play the guitar and sing. Last year I released my third album. Now I travel around the country sharing my songs of hope, love, loss, and joy. I share the painful parts of my life, but I also let others know to never give up on their goals, whatever they may be. Life is indeed hard for so many of us, but *always* follow your heart and your dreams.

For more information about Michael Skinner visit his website at www.mskinnermusic.com



AN ARTIST IS BORN

By Adam Leech, Portsmouth Herald

Tom Owens leaned in, moved his head ever so slightly, then moved back to take a look at his progress. His careful touch and attention to detail are apparent, as every stroke of his brush slowly brings a blank canvas to life. But inside, the 53-year-old man who was born with cerebral palsy comes to life as well.

Owens uses a wheelchair, has difficulty speaking and has little use of his hands, as is the case with many tenants at Betty's Dream, a facility created 20 years ago to enable disabled adults to live independently while receiving care and assistance.

For most of his life, Owens did not realize he was an artist. In fact, up until last January, Owens never had the ability or opportunity to try anything artistic.

Then one day, Doug Harnden bumped into Owens outside the building on Longfellow Lane. The maintenance worker at the complex had started volunteering to teach residents how to waterpaint and asked Owens what he could do with his hands, which he found to be basically nothing – certainly not hold a paintbrush steady.

"I said, 'Can you move your head?' And he showed he could so I told him, 'We need to stick a brush up your nose!'" said Harnden. "Well, it was said as a joke. Then the next day we got together to try to devise some way to get a brush to stay attached to his head."

What they came up with was a ball cap with an extra-large paper fastener clipped on the bill with a hole drilled in it, which held a paint brush.

With some paint and a cup of water elevated on the table next to him, Owens quickly caught on and produced some impressive work with basically no assistance. Since then, Owens' talent has emerged even more as his landscape scenes decorate a corridor in the facility.

"I can leave Tom in here for six hours and he wouldn't mind," said Harnden. "He just loves to paint."

"A lot of students come in here and have a hesitancy, or wait for Doug to map their every move out," said Sandy Mahoney, Harnden's assistant. "We set him up and put everything at his height and check in on him a couple of times... He just has such a natural eye for the art that he's doing it with great quality."

The goal of the program, Rainbow Watercolors, which is in its second year, is to open up opportunities in the arts for people at Betty's Dream.



Tom Owens paints a riverside landscape with his brush clamped to the bill of his hat.

Scott Yates, Portsmouth Herald

Some members went to the WCSH Channel 6 Sidewalk Art Festival in Portland, Maine, last month to display and sell some of their work. Harnden said he wants to get more residents involved.

Mahoney said the program has also had a positive impact of her life, as well as on her husband, Steve, whom she lives with at the facility. Steve was artistic before a traffic accident in 1985 resulted in a head injury that caused his dominant hand to switch from left to right. They started the program together and have also found Steve's talent re-emerge, while Sandy has developed a new passion.

"It's done some amazing things for him," said Mahoney. "And me as well."

The program has had a noticeable effect on Owens' outlook, according to Eric Delage, who works for Life Share Inc., and has visited with Owens regularly the past five years.

"It's changed him. Before, I'd leave and he'd just wait and look forward to the next day and now that he has this outlet he's realized he's creative. I think he's surprised himself," said Delage. "I couldn't paint like that with my hands, so it's really cool."

They are currently looking to secure a van so that members, most of whom are wheelchair users, will be able to visit museums, do on-site paintings and show off some of their work. Harnden said the work may soon be displayed at a local gallery.

"We'd love to take these guys out in the field to Prescott Park or something like that," said Harnden. "It's been great and I hope we can keep it going."

This article was originally published in the Portsmouth Herald and is reprinted with their permission.

A PASSION FOR WRITING

By Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

Max took the arm and carefully attached it to the stump below Bob's left shoulder. "OK, you can give it a try." Max backed away to give Bob some room.

Bob lifted the arm and moved it around. "Cool!" He pulled it back and forth and swung it around. He brought it down in front of himself and looked at its intricate workings. "What's this red button do?" He asked, moving his curious fingers toward the button.

"NO! That's an explosive. Don't touch that." Max grabbed Bob's hand.

~ Excerpt from *The One Armed Little Geek Boy*, by Gina Colantuoni

Dark Lady can leap far; Jungle Woman swings through the trees; Mouse Man has a bionic arm; The Prince of Space wields a mighty sword. What do they all have in common? They are superheroes with superpowers who also have disabilities and they are creations straight out of the imagination of Gina Colantuoni.

Creative writing, especially science fiction and fantasy, is Gina's passion. In her words:

"Over the years I have written countless short stories and one poem all which combine to make one large collection of Kassey's Team stories. Miss Kassey, or Captain Kassey, is an all-knowing, all-seeing, 1,000 year old, rich, sign language interpreting, beautiful, eccentric captain of a team of superheroes made up of individuals with disabilities. Each character is unique and goes through their own struggles in becoming a successful team member and crime fighter. The team itself is made up of at least 15 members and has an extensive network of supporting family, friends, and team allies. There is also a whole cast of villains and foes. The characters are from outer space, the ocean, or even right next-door making for some very interesting cultural differences.

Of all the stories I have written, Dark Lady is my favorite. It tells the story of a young deaf woman who has cerebral palsy, just like me."

Gina comes from an artistic family and has always been creative. As a child, she wanted to be involved in everything her brothers and sisters did. Bright and curious, she tried everything they tried. In addition to her story writing and illustration, Gina has a handmade greeting card business, makes jewelry, and works part time at *Bead It!* in Concord.

Now in her 20's, Gina went to Bow public schools and was included in regular classes. When she was in second grade, Julie Patch, an Itinerant Services Teacher of the Deaf, began teaching her to read. Those first years were a struggle. With standard English not her first language, learning to read was extraordinarily difficult for Gina as it is for many deaf people. Julie wouldn't let Gina slack off. Gina's mother, Maryellen, remembers that in the beginning it was so frustrating that, "They would come just short of blows." Finally, when Gina was 10 there came a moment when everything just clicked. Gina remembers it well and said she and Julie both cried. Gina became a voracious reader devouring everything she could get her hands on.



Gina Colantuoni holds a book of her writings. The cover illustration is a self-portrait. Her cat Soc is on her lap.

Julia Freeman-Woolpert

A few years after learning to read Gina got the writing bug. "It was exciting," she said. "I had all these ideas floating around in my head, I just had to grab them." In middle school Gina wrote fairy tales, dictating stories to her mother. Maryellen remembered that the plots were complicated, "I didn't realize how far ahead she was thinking until she took all the loose ends and tied them together." Gina moved on to murder mysteries, and finally to her current love, science fiction and fantasy. She has filled notebook after notebook with her stories and poems.

These days Gina uses ASL and signed English to dictate her stories to Jodie Novak, her personal assistant hired through Community Bridges. While she can type independently, with her cerebral palsy dictation is much quicker and far less exhausting. Her cat Soc (Silly Orange Cat) also assists, trailing along wherever Gina goes, doing his best to sit on the keyboard when Gina is writing. Gina does her own illustrations using a computer program. She enlarges the image when she is working so she can have plenty of leeway to include all the details.

Gina is trying to get published. She has consulted with local writers and submitted her work to several publications. She hasn't had any luck so far, but she is keeping at it. After all, it took 13 tries before J. K. Rowling found a publisher for *Harry Potter*.

Any history buffs out there? Gina is planning a series on time-travel and could use some help with background information. You can contact her at GinaColantuoni@yahoo.com.



LILLY: THE ADVENTURES OF DARK LADY

By Gina Colantuoni

Lilly Stebbins became very sick soon after she was born. The illness left her deaf and with cerebral palsy. She was in the hospital for a long time. Her mom would come and visit, holding Lilly, talking to her, loving her. Sometimes her mom would cry because she was worried. Her dad would hold her too. He told her everything would be OK.

Lilly grew up with the support of her family and friends. She was a bright, happy child. She communicated with everyone through sign language or she read lips. She never got into trouble. She did well in school and helped out when she could at home.

When she turned 20, her life began to change.

One night, Lilly was sleeping when she heard a strange noise. This was really weird, since she was deaf! She also felt a little odd. Lilly swung her legs over the side of the bed and stood up.

She had never stood up on her own before. Wow! Weird again. She stood there enjoying the moment. She took a step forward. She heard a woman's voice, then a man's voice. They were arguing.

Lilly knew instinctively that the woman's voice was her mother's, but the man's voice was not her father's. Her father was away on business and not set to return for a few more days.

"You can't have my daughter's money!" her mother yelled.

"MMOOOMMM!" Lilly screamed.

The man, who was standing in the living room, turned his head in Lilly's direction. "Who was that?" he swung his head back around and glared at Lilly's mom.

(Continued on page 6)



illustrator, Gina Colantuoni



PROVING THEM WRONG

By Carol Stamatakis, Esq., NH Council on Developmental Disabilities

Curtis Glover is an 18 year old who has a great eye. With his digital camera he is able to capture striking images – from the smallest details on a flower to panoramic vistas. In April, Curtis had his first photography show at Daniel Webster College's Gallery One. It was a great success and Curtis sold a number of his photographs.

Curtis who has autism "likes to prove them wrong." He comes by this attitude naturally. When he was two years old his mother, Sandra Glover, was advised not to become too attached to her son. She was told that Curtis may never talk, would never be toilet trained, and wouldn't be capable of attending a regular school. Fortunately, his parents refused to accept these limited expectations. While there have been significant challenges – Curtis, in fact, did not speak until he was 7 – Curtis and his family proved the professionals wrong.

Sandra credits early intervention with making "all the difference in the world" for Curtis. Curtis also benefited from attending schools in a district that worked closely with the family and helped assure consistency between the classroom and home. Sandra said the team that worked with

her assured her that despite the challenges, Curtis would be OK. She commented, "This was a beautiful thing to hear. If we had listened (to the earlier predictions) Lord knows where he would be today."

Curtis is currently taking an advanced photography class. His teacher Michael Cirelli, observed, "He has an eye for examining the beauty of different objects and his compositional skills are very good. He makes great images that the viewer wants to explore. He is a very environmentally conscious student and that shows in his photography. An important part of taking pictures is getting people excited about what you're looking at. Curtis is able to envision it and do it. The sky's the limit."

Curtis' passion for protecting the natural world shines through in his work. He hopes that his nature photographs will encourage people to protect the environment. While on vacation in Hawaii he took a remarkable photograph of a sea turtle's face as it emerged from the water. A professional photographer told Curtis how extraordinarily difficult it is to capture such an image, but Curtis' timing was perfect. Curtis has been trained in traditional film photography but

(Continued from page 5)

"I-I-I don't know." Some of her mother's anger had fallen away, replaced with confusion. Lilly's mom looked down the hall and saw Lilly in the shadows. Lilly motioned for her to be quiet. Then, without warning, Lilly jumped out of the shadows onto the man's back. She grabbed him around his neck and they struggled. Lilly stood up and started punching the man in the stomach. Hard!!

The man collapsed onto the floor. During the struggle, Lilly's mom had grabbed the phone and the police were on their way. Lilly quickly grabbed the scarf that was on the back of the dining room chair and tied that man's hands behind his back.

"Are you OK?" her mom asked as she hung up the phone.

Lilly slumped to the floor. "I feel a little weak." The sun was rising. As the light began to brighten the room, Lilly felt weaker and weaker. The sounds of the room began to

fall away and become more jumbled until there was only silence. Lilly closed her eyes.

The police arrived shortly after and arrested the man. When Lilly woke up, she was back in her own bed. She wondered if it had all been a dream. She looked over and saw her mom sitting next to her on the bed.

"Thank goodness you are OK! Dad is on his way back home. The company sent a helicopter to get him here," her mom signed. The house started to shake and vibrate.

"What's that?" Lilly signed.

"The helicopter," her mother answered.

WHAT HAPPENED TO LILLY?

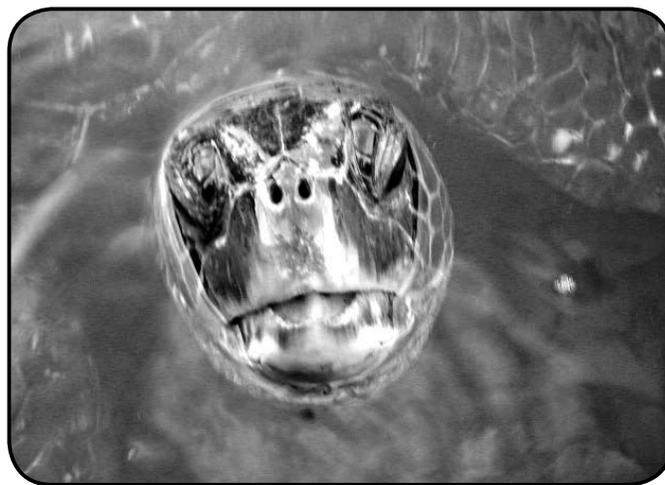
One year later, Lilly moved to an apartment close to Boston. Now she works "part time, nights" as DARK LADY. That is when Lilly can hear, talk, walk, and fight all that is bad in the world.

prefers to work with the digital camera. He is currently using a 14.7 megapixel Canon Power Shot G10, which has a rechargeable battery. He feels the digital camera is more "eco-friendly" and this is an important consideration for him.

His family has encouraged Curtis to explore all his interests and see where they will take him. From his grandmother, who was raised on a farm, he learned to love plants and has become an avid organic gardener. He is currently working out the plans to build a solar heater in a backyard greenhouse. His interest in weather has led to a friendship with local meteorologist Al Kaprielian. At school he is a member of the Biodiesel Team and has created a battery charger from discarded solar panels. He studies karate and has earned a blue belt. He's become politically active, volunteering for Jeanne Shaheen in her campaign for US Senate. Shaheen showed her appreciation by inviting Curtis to introduce her at an event in his community.

Curtis also has learned to be an effective advocate. He has stood up for himself when other students have harassed him for being different. He also speaks out when he sees other students with disabilities who are being bullied or discriminated against. He has confronted the school when they have underestimated his abilities. When he was advised against taking chemistry because it would be too difficult for him, Curtis insisted on enrolling in the course. He received an A+, the highest grade in his class – once again proving them wrong.

Curtis Glover now has a business selling photographic prints, post cards, mugs, and magnets. He uses 100% recycled paper and biodegradable nuggets for packaging. For more information you can contact Curtis at curtisgloverphotography@yahoo.com



Curtis Glover

Sea turtle

The National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) promotes the full inclusion of audiences and artists with disabilities into all facets of the arts community. The NADC is a leading consultant in the arts and disability community, and the only center of its kind. NADC information is aimed at artists with disabilities, arts organizations, museums, arts administrators, disability organizations, performing arts organizations, art centers, universities, arts educators, and students. The NADC is a project of the University of California, at Los Angeles, Tarjan Center. The NADC web site offers free resource directories, and annotated bibliographies on a wide array of subjects. Including:

- ◆ Careers in the Arts
- ◆ Funding Resources
- ◆ Arts and Accessibility
- ◆ Disability Art and Culture
- ◆ Assistive Devices, Services and Products
- ◆ How to Design an Accessible Web Site
- ◆ US and International Theatre Companies for Performers with Disabilities
- ◆ Mixed Ability Dance Resource Directory
- ◆ Arts and Disability Network

For more information visit NADC's website at <http://nadc.ucla.edu/>



ART BEYOND SIGHT – NH Exhibition Reinforces National Push for Accessible Art

By Andrew Leibs

In April, Portsmouth's Robert Lincoln Levy Gallery presented "Art Beyond Sight," New Hampshire's first interactive art show for people who are blind. The show, a collaborative effort by the New Hampshire Art Association (NHAA) and the New Hampshire Association of the Blind (NHAB), featured tactile and high-contrast works from 65 New England artists.

Drawing over 5,000 visitors, the show energized artists and audiences alike. "It was a very insightful exhibition, both for blind persons and the non-disabled, and helped artists look at their work differently," said NHAA executive director Billie Tooley.

With an emphasis on symmetry and texture, the pieces transcended sight. For example, Kyeong Kim's composition "Peace Within" featured a stone on a wooden block centered on a steel background all inside a square wood frame. At the top of the piece, nail heads spell out in Braille "Peace Within."

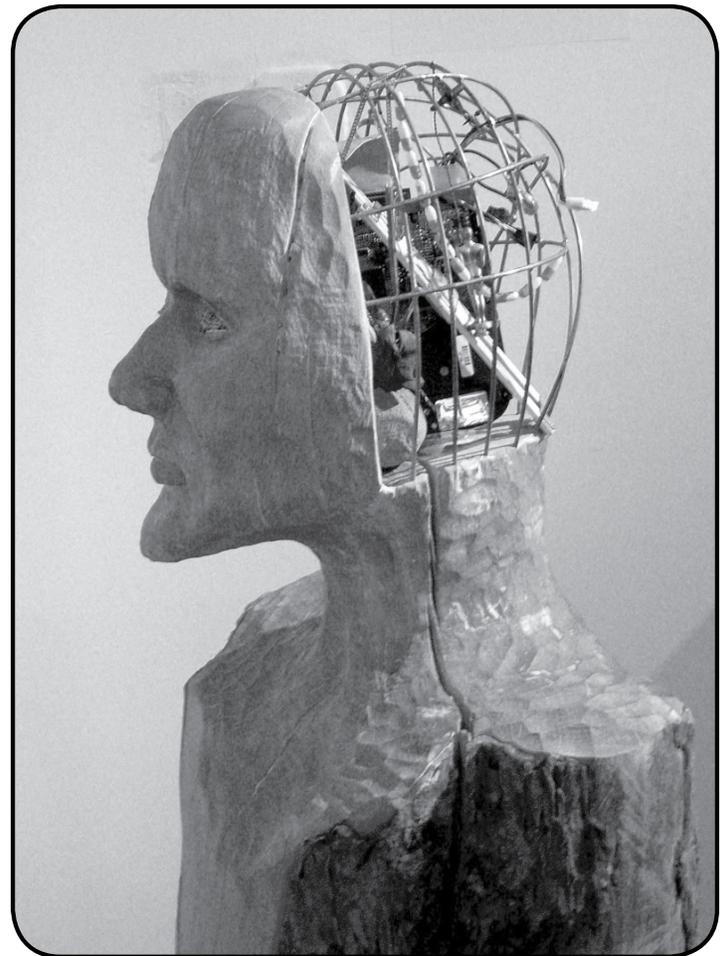
It was the first exhibit where Stephanie Hurd, an NHAB volunteer coordinator, could experience art's many shapes and textures through touch. Hurd who lost her sight when she was in her 20's said, "For me, it was an active sensation; not simply passively listening to other's descriptions of art. Seeing is believing, and I enjoyed 'seeing' with my own hands what everyone else sees with their eyes."

The New Hampshire show reflects a growing trend in programs that seek to make art more accessible to people with disabilities. The show's title, "Art Beyond Sight," was borrowed from Art Education for the Blind (AEB), which, for years, has run programs at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

AEB provides those who are blind and visually impaired with equal access to the world's visual culture through special exhibits, materials, and publications. Its annual international conference, "Multimodal Approaches to Learning" (October 16-17 2009, Metropolitan Museum of Art) brings together educators, artists, museum professionals, architects,

and designers to discuss inclusive learning environments and opportunities that better serve all audiences, especially those with sensory impairments.

"A major goal of the conference is to help develop an audience of art devotees among the disabled and to create teaching techniques that bring art to life through the senses," said AEB executive director Nina Levent.



Artist Rick Burns' wooden sculpture, *Programmed*, took 3rd place at the *Art Beyond Sight* interactive art show.

Expressing Yourself

Many accessible art programs are designed to help individuals with disabilities to express themselves. The Shield Institute founded Pure Vision Arts (PVA) in 2002 as the New York City's first studio and exhibition space for people with developmental disabilities. At PVA, profes-

sionals with education, fine arts, and art therapy backgrounds mentor and support beginning, emerging, and established artists.

"Ever since the deinstitutionalization of the developmentally disabled in the 1970s, there's been a steady increase in the amount of programs for the disabled, particularly in the arts," said PVA executive director Pam Rogers. "The whole "outsider art" movement has also sparked interest and inspired museums to develop programs that have launched artists." All PVA artists are self-taught; some work on commissioned pieces; others create work for sale or exhibition.

"I would like to see more fine art made accessible to the disabled," says Dan Keplinger, an artist with cerebral palsy and star of the Oscar-winning documentary short, *King Gimp*. "I think art should be used as a tool for self-expression and building one's self esteem."

Keplinger believes that art is vital for people who have disabilities. It can communicate how life really is. "People are often scared to express their true feelings artistically," said Keplinger. Many of his self-portraits, painted in bold colors on large canvases, include his wheelchair. "People still want to see crafts and greeting cards; my art lets out the dark side."

Providing Access to Culture

Accessible art takes many forms, from monthly after-hours tours for the sight and hearing impaired at New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, to delivering audio description and American Sign Language through a touch-screen interface that display images, videos, and captioning. The XP-Vision Multimedia Player is used in many places, including the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library in Houston.

In 1966, Michael Spencer began giving concerts in New York mental institutions. In 1969, with support from the state, Spencer launched Hospital Audiences, Inc. (HAI)

to bring arts to those whose access is limited by health, age, or income. HAI expanded to serve nursing homes in the 1970s and in the late 1980s, began reaching out to persons with physical and developmental disabilities. HAI makes summer concerts in Central Park accessible; subsidizes front-row tickets so that those who are blind and visually impaired can get more from Shakespeare in the Park, and has hosted US veterans from Walter Reed Hospital and their families for cultural weekends in New York City. "We're about mainstreaming society and taking people to places such as the Met and Carnegie Hall," Spencer said.

The world of accessible art continues to expand. According to Tooley, the success of New Hampshire's "Art Beyond Sight" show has inspired the NHAA to create similar exhibits in other regions of the state. "It's important for communities to realize that blind people can experience art – they just do it in a different way," said Tooley.

Resources

New Hampshire Art Association
www.nhartassociation.org

New Hampshire Association for the Blind
www.sightcenter.com

Art Education for the Blind
www.artbeyondsight.org

The Shield Institute (Pure Vision Arts)
www.shield.org/pure-vision-arts.html

Dan Keplinger
www.kinggimp.com

Hospital Audiences, Inc.
www.hospitalaudiences.org

Andrew Leibs writes about accessible recreation for Suite101.com and about blindness issues on his website, VisAbilityStories.com.

“ I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE FUN.”

By Kathy Bates

Creativity is something that almost everyone has in one form or another. Maybe you are a culinary genius or maybe you love to write poetry. I am amazed by all the different colors and shades that I can see by just looking out my window. I love to paint. Friends sometimes tell me that my paintings are beautiful. If I have even a little bit of talent I come by it naturally. My mother and sister are both professional artists. I grew up with painting all around me. One of my favorite things to do is go to an art museum and just soak up all the beautiful colors.

I have cerebral palsy and sometimes I get frustrated when I'm trying to paint, because my hands don't always let me paint what my eyes and mind see. This is not as frustrating as trying to access an art class in the community though. Last November a friend and I signed up for an Adult Ed painting class at a nearby high school. The class was just one 2½ hour evening session. The cost was \$45, which at the time was really more than I could afford. I knew I wouldn't have trouble getting into the school or finding

parking. My friend would be driving my van and would help me set up my paints. We were both excited about taking the class.

When we got to the school there were no signs for the class and it took us a long time to find the art room. Even with our wandering around the building, we still arrived before the instructor, who showed up a half an hour after the class was scheduled to start. The art room chairs and tables were taller than normal and sitting in my wheelchair the table where I was supposed to work was much too high for me to paint well. When the instructor finally arrived, she asked us to gather around an even higher table to watch her demonstrate painting techniques. Trying to watch from my wheelchair I felt like a little kid – I could barely see over the table. When the instructor finished the demonstration I had to ask her to bring the painting over to me so I could see what she had done. Then I rushed back to my table and tried to get myself comfortable enough to start painting again. Every fifteen minutes the



MY SINGING EXPERIENCE

By Tammy Mills

It all started when I was two or three years old. I started singing songs that were easy to learn by ear. I was born to love music and my musical vocal talent came very natural to me at an early age. I was singing songs at nursery school and the day care center. Later I learned new songs at elementary schools. Singing new songs made me feel real good back then, and it still makes me feel great now.

When I was fourteen years old, I started singing with the junior high chorale. I was in a two-part choral group that sang popular songs that you hear on the radio. I learned new songs such as The Monster's in the Mud, Theme From Mahogany, The Leader of the Band, and Bless the Beasts and Children. When I was sixteen, I started sing-

ing with the high school chorus, and learned songs like I Sing the Body Electric from Fame, Come Follow Me and The Best of the Beach Boys.

While I was singing with the high school chorus I was introduced to a magazine that was loaded down with words to all the top 40 songs. That magazine was *Song Hits*, and I loved it. At home on the weekends, I learned the words to songs like Smooth Operator, Material Girl, Call to the Heart. I continued learning new songs from the *Song Hits Magazine* until the late 80's when it dropped the pop, soul and country categories and switched to all rock. That's when I started thinking, "What's going on here? If I can't learn new songs from the pop and soul categories, then how do I continue reading the

instructor would have us come back up to watch another demonstration at her ridiculously tall table.

I did not realize when I signed up for the class, that the instructor's goal was for everyone to have a finished painting at the end of class. I felt very rushed. The instructor seemed to be as frustrated as I was with my inability to keep up. She didn't understand me at all – she would ask me to hold the brush sideways, but my wrist won't go that way. When she came over to check on how I was doing, she would end up taking over. I would say I can do it and before I knew it she had done quite a bit of MY painting. I wanted to tell her that I knew something about painting, and that I really could do it myself. It was very strange. I felt like I was back in elementary school again fighting for my right to be educated just like everyone else. The instructor made me feel like I should be in some remedial art class. I didn't feel free to create in my own way.

In spite of the difficulties I had with this class, I did appreciate the experience because it taught me a lot. I did not

really learn much about painting, but I did learn some other valuable lessons. Now when I call to ask about accessibility, I know that I need more information than the usual "you can park and get in the door." I need to ask about the accessibility of the room, including the height of the tables. I also realized that once I'm set up to paint it's very hard to move around and then come back and get set up all over again. Next time, I'll ask to speak to the instructor ahead of time to find out how the class is organized.

I would still love to take another art class. Taking a class that met once a week or every couple of weeks would allow me to have a set time to paint and time in between classes to work on new techniques. I would not feel so rushed and I could learn at my own pace. This experience didn't discourage me. I still paint at home and I know that some day I will take another class.

Kathy Bates is owner of Wings and Wheels Consulting Services. She speaks and writes about community involvement and human potential. She can be reached by email at wngsandwheels@comcast.net

magazine?" In the early 90's I noticed that the stores stopped selling *Song Hits*, and the words to the top 40 songs became unsolved mysteries. DOUBLE DRAT!

After graduating from high school, I joined a community chorus. I learned new songs with the chorus from 1991 until the fall of 2007, when the chorus came to a disappointing stop. I've been stuck without access to a choral group for over two years now, and all I can ask myself is, "Who moved my choral cheese?" And believe it or not, that question still hangs in the air to this very time.

My physical disability doesn't stop me from singing now, and it sure didn't stop me from singing way back then. It just goes to show you that a self-advocate can sing song after song no matter where she is, at a conference, a meeting, a concert, or at home. What can make me feel great is singing a song I really love. For me that's FABULOUS!



Carol Stamatakis

Singer, Tammy Mills.

THE LANGUAGE OF BEAUTY

By Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

Art is a technique of communication. The image is the most complete technique of all communication.

~ Claus Oldenburg, sculptor

Connie Clanton can often be found on her back porch in Concord, painting in the soft northern light. "Art is the number one passion in my life," said Connie. She was first introduced to the beauty of visual expression when she learned American Sign Language (ASL) as a young child.

Connie paints with oils and watercolors and uses an intaglio printing technique. She loves the blues and greens of the ocean, often painting seascapes with children playing by the shore. Her love of ASL and Deaf culture come through in her art, both in subject matter and the visual communication she incorporates in her work. She's done illustrations of signing hands and gestures and important events and figures in Deaf history.

Connie's love for art began as child in Mississippi. When she was nine years old she became enchanted with an oil portrait that hung in her best friend's house. She marveled at the beauty of the painting and thought, "Maybe I can do this!"

The Tennessee School for the Deaf, where Connie was a boarding student during middle and high school, had an excellent art

program. Connie took full advantage of the art classes. She also became friends with a housemother at the school who was a skilled artist. Connie remembers their long conversations about painting and art. Later she studied art at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., where the chair of the Art Department, Dr. Craig Greene, was fluent in ASL.

Today Connie is embarking on a new project. She is illustrating a book for ASL Tales, a national publication that translates traditional stories and new fiction into ASL. The company has published ASL versions of fairy tales Rapunzel and the Princess and the Pea, in book and DVD format for both Deaf and hearing children. Connie is in the preliminary stages of illustrating a story for ASL Tales about diversity. The story follows two best friends, one white and one black, who meet each summer at the ocean. Connie is sketching scenes in watercolors, feeling her way into the project. "It has to be in your heart before it can come out of your brush," she explained.

When Connie is not painting, she teaches ASL in the Manchester schools. For inquiries about her art, she can be reached at clantonconnie9@gmail.com. You can find out more about ASL Tales, and order books online at <http://www.asltales.net>, or purchase the books at Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services in Concord (www.ndhhs.org).



Artist Connie Clanton at work on her back porch.

VSA ARTS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Deborah Stuart, Program Committee Chair, VSA arts of New Hampshire, and Editor and Contributing Writer, *Start With the Arts*

For 35 years Congress has funded programs to assure that children and adults with disabilities have access to the arts both as participants and as audiences. VSA art, an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, is an international organization that has a presence in every state and in 55 countries.

Here in New Hampshire VSA arts has been active for 26 years. We are committed to promoting arts, education, and creative expression for children and adults with disabilities. We believe that experiencing music, theatre, visual arts, and creative movement strengthens the human spirit and

improves the quality of life for all. Over the years VSA arts has been in NH, we have worked on a wide range of projects and programs to assure universal access to the arts.

For the last three years VSA arts of NH has focused on education and the role that the arts can play in meeting the needs of diverse learners, including children and young people who are at risk of school failure because of disabilities or developmental delays. Current educational research has found that tailoring instruction to meet individual needs is the best way for all students to learn. This
(Continued on page 15)

Darlene Furbush Ouellett



John Walker in the studio.

JOHN WALKER – ARTIST

By Darlene Furbush Ouellett

Lying on the studio floor in his favorite position, inspiration unfolds. Ideas abound and are captured on paper. John Walker has been on a yearlong quest to become a better draftsman. John often begins his drawings by looking at objects; as he works, his imagination and photographic memory are triggered. The results are unique drawings often centered on music. Music is John's first passion.

John collects vinyl records and can describe in detail every album cover in his collection, name all the musicians, the year the album was recorded, and provide a wealth of other information. His attention to detail and memory are a trait I would not mind having now that my aging mind is having skips in memory.

John has been drawing for years and loved creating cartoons when he was younger. Now he is concentrating on learning technical drawing skills. He is working on composition, incorporating perspective, light, and shading into his artwork.

I have been John's art teacher for the last ten years. Together we have explored many forms of art making. He has worked on sculptures, done printmaking, and lots of drawing. He has painted, learning to mix colors and capture light and shadows. He has done many self-portraits. John and I have even painted portraits of each other, something that would not have been possible ten years ago. When he first began art classes John was unable to make direct eye contact for long periods of time, something that he can now do. Our conversations are much livelier these days too!

In the fall of 2007 John had a very successful show of his paintings and printmaking images at Living Innovations Home Care in Greenland, New Hampshire. He is currently working on drawings and musically inspired poster art for his next show. We'll keep you posted on the date.



OPEN YOUR EYES

Roberta Gallant, Museum Goer and Art Lover

On Friday, August 28, 2009, I went to the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester with Ellen Dokton, my tutor. At the Museum were several permanent shows and two special exhibits. On our way to the special exhibits, we passed many spectacular items. The first was the blown glass paper weights. All the paperweights on display contained beautiful designs and colors. I looked at their details both inside and outside. My favorite paperweight had a cluster of tiny purple flowers with a red-and-white mesh surrounding them.

The two special shows we viewed included wood turning sculptures, and graphite art. The special wood turning objects are gorgeous! The wood texture and grain is nothing but natural beauty to people's eyes. The different shapes and sizes attract more viewing visits. My favorite wooden vessel is comprised of perfectly swirling lines that the artist cut out from ebony wood. What I liked about this piece was that the overhead lights cast a shadow through it on the podium.

The second special exhibit we viewed was the Spotlight New England. This show included

Gary Haven Smith's stonework and Gerald Auten's graphite art. My favorite stone sculpture is "Diora". What I like about Gary Haven Smith's granite piece is its twists and curves, and it has edges that are naturally wavy. Light and shadows pass through the long rectangular hole in the center of the sculpture. The sculpture dances as a human being does. It swirls on the dance floor.

Gerald Auten is someone who works well with graphite. Mr. Auten cannot see in one eye. He uses a glove on his hand to polish graphite on paper making two dimensional images look three dimensional. Gerald Auten's specialty is to manifest beauty within the beholder! I favor his Halfwash graphite work. He likes using light to define the edges of things. He polishes and repolishes the graphite to create the illusion of metal. What I enjoy about this piece is it creates shadows and three dimensional effects making the object look like stairs.

Ms. Gallant lives and works in Concord. In 1992 Ms. Gallant received the Martin Luther King Award for her lifetime commitment to social justice. Ms. Gallant is a former resident of the Laconia State School.



Roberta Gallant

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

*Please let us know if The RAP Sheet is helpful to you. The New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities, along with the Disabilities Rights Center, and Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, funds and produces **The RAP Sheet**.*

*The federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) requires the Council to conduct an annual satisfaction survey. Your feedback will help ensure that federal policymakers understand the impact of Council-supported activities like **The RAP Sheet** on the lives of people with disabilities and their families. Your feedback also will help the Council to improve the quality and effectiveness of future activities.*

*Please take a moment to complete the survey, even if **The RAP Sheet** is the only Council-supported initiative you are familiar with. The survey is short and easy to complete! Simply go to the Council's web site at <http://www.nhddc.org/> and follow the link on the home page. Surveys need to be completed by December 11, 2009.*

(Continued from page 13)

is great news for those of us working with children and youth with disabilities. Looking at individual learning styles shifts the emphasis away from what people with disabilities can't do and instead focuses on the individual's strengths and interests. What better place than the arts where unique expression is most honored to demonstrate respect for personal choice and support of self-expression! VSA arts of NH provides consultation and training to schools and educators around the state. We work primarily on a fee-for-service basis or through our national organization on projects that are funded by the federal Department of Education.

One of VSA arts' most exciting projects, the Arts in Early Learning, is entering its fourth year. This project is a collaborative effort with the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire and provides training in arts-based activities that are tied to literacy and learning goals for young children. We have been offering training opportunities to a wide variety of audiences in the North country including: early childhood and elementary school teachers, in-home care providers, child care centers, children's librarians, students in early childhood classes at White Mountain Community College and Plymouth State University, Child Resource and Referral Service staff, parents, and interested community members. The program uses *Start With the Arts* as the foundation for its work. This publication is an excellent resource for teachers of young students and is widely used both nationally and internationally (it is available in Spanish). Arts in Early Learning also offers workshops, in-school model teaching, classroom lectures for college students and for continuing education credits, and in-service conferences on how to use the arts to meet the needs of all children, with a particular emphasis on adaptive strategies. All training is designed to help early childhood workers find ways to fully include children with disabilities and developmental delays so that they can work successfully and happily with their peers. More information can be found at www.startwiththearts.org, as well as on the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire website at www.aannh.org.

Currently, a Board Committee is responsible for VSA arts' programs for information please contact (603) 764-9159.

INCLUDING SAMUEL

A DOCUMENTARY BY DAN HABIB



INCLUDING SAMUEL on NHPTV this Fall!

Dan Habib's award-winning documentary *Including Samuel* is scheduled to air on New Hampshire Public Television on:

- Monday, October 5th at 8 p.m.
- Friday, October 9th at 1 p.m.
- Sunday, October 11th at 10 p.m.
- Friday, October 16th at 10:30 p.m.

A NH OUTLOOK special about the film's impact on the Habib family follows each broadcast. Screening Toolkits are available online for youth and adults who would like to host viewing parties around the broadcasts.

Major support for *Including Samuel* comes from:

- CVS Caremark All Kids Can
- National Inclusion Project
- NH Charitable Foundation
- Endowment for Health

For free Screening Toolkits and information about broadcasts across the country, visit:

www.includingsamuel.com

The New IOD Bookstore



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Disabilities Rights Center presents...

Special Education and Discipline

...on NH Public Access Television!

A six part series exploring special education and discipline in our public schools, beginning in October.



Find out where and when to watch at:
www.drcnh.org/tv.htm



Resources

VSA Arts New Hampshire

44 South Main Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-228-4330
<http://www.vsaartsnh.org/>

VSA Arts (national)

An affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
<http://www.vsarts.org/x11.xml>

Special education and the arts

Website from Southern Connecticut State University
<http://www.southernct.edu/~gerber/SEDarts/index.htm>

National Arts and Disability Center

<http://nadc.ucla.edu/>

Art Beyond Sight

A resource for bringing art and culture to people with visual impairments.
<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/>

Mouth and Foot Painting Artists

<http://www.mfpausa.com/>

National Institute of Art & Disabilities (NIAD)

<http://www.niadart.org/>

ASL Tales

Children's books, "told by professional storytellers, who are native users of ASL, in order to delight you with the beauty of this language."
P.O.Box 80354
Portland, OR 97280-1354
<http://www.asltales.net/>

SAVE THE DATE!

The Coalition of Caring

3rd Annual Statewide Caregivers Conference

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

8:00 am - 4:15 pm

Lake Opechee Inn and Spa
Laconia, New Hampshire

Registration fee of \$25 (scholarships available)

Who should attend?

Parents, spouses, relatives, adult children
and friends in the community who are caregivers.

Guest Speakers will cover topics such as:

- Self Care for the Caregiver
- Caregiver Depression
- Creating Joy in Your Heart
- Assistive Technology and Caregivers
- Caregiver Estate Planning

To request a registration brochure,
contact:

Ellen Edgerly, Coalition of Caring

Phone: 603-332-9891

or e-mail:

ellenedge@metrocast.net

Visit our website at:

www.coalitionofcaring.org/





INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY / UCED
A University Center for Excellence on Disability

IOD TRAIN

Assistive and Universal Design Technologies

This six-part professional development series focuses on the development and implementation of quick and cost effective assistive technology solutions as well as embracing universally design technology to support all students. RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America) CEUs are available for an additional \$16 per session if requested. Additional dates in 2010.

Dates:

October 22: Universal Design Software to Achieve Educational Success (Session 1)

Cost: \$75

Presenter: Neil MacGregor

November 9: Technology Tools for Student Access and Success (Session 2)

Cost: \$75

Presenter: Dan Herlihy

Time: 9am - 3pm

Location: Holiday Inn, Concord, NH

Facilitated Communication 2: Beyond the Basics

This workshop will provide in-depth information on selected topics in facilitated communication (FC), including literacy, developing independence for FC users, developing conversational skills of FC users, research on FC, methods of teaching authorship skills to FC users and the use of technology for FC users. This workshop will be useful for people who have experience with FC and wish to advance their knowledge and skills with the method.

Date & Location: October 23, 2009 – Institute on Disability, Concord, NH

Time: 9am - 3:30pm

Cost: \$95

Presenter: Pascal Cheng, M.Ed., C.A.S.

2009 Real Choice Conference

This one-day conference will address public policy and best practices for ensuring the future of a quality direct support workforce in home and community based services. The

keynote presentation on “Valuing Care Work: Priorities for Public Policy” given by Nancy Folbre, Ph.D., will be enhanced by eight breakout sessions on recruiting, training, and retaining direct support workers. For information about Social work CEUs, call 603.228.2084

Date & Location: October 27, 2009 – Center of NH Radisson, Manchester, NH

Time: 8am - 3:15pm

Cost: \$75 for professionals;
\$25 for consumers and family members

Keynote Presenter: Nancy Folbre, Ph.D.,
University of Massachusetts

Guest Speaker: Lori Sedlezky, MSW,
University of Minnesota

Person-Centered Planning for Older Adults – Facilitation Skills Training in Consumer- Directed Life Planning

This workshop offers an introduction to person-centered planning, including an overview of a person-centered system of care, information on how to facilitate planning meetings, and tools to use in the planning process. Additional dates and locations available in spring 2010.

4 EASY WAYS TO REGISTER!

- 1  online
WWW.IOD.UNH.EDU
- 2  call to register or to request a registration form
603.228.2084
- 3  mail a completed registration form
**INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY
56 OLD SUNCOOK ROAD, SUITE 2
CONCORD, NH 03301**
- 4  fax a completed registration form
603.228.3270

ING & EVENTS:

Dates & Locations:

November 5: Courtyard Marriott, Lebanon, NH

November 20: Lake Opechee Inn and Spa,
Lakeport, NH

Time: 9am - 4pm

Cost: \$25

Presenters: Susan Fox, M.Ed., MA, and Patty
Cotton, M.Ed.

The Paraeducator's Toolbox – Practical Strategies to Support Academic Achievement for Students with Learning and Behavioral Challenges

These workshops will provide participants with effective and proactive approaches that promote successful academic outcomes, social competency, and management of behavioral challenges. Each workshop has been specifically designed to address the complex social, emotional, and learning needs of students. Additional dates and locations available in spring 2010.

Dates: Preschool & Elementary School –
Monday, November 9, 2009

Middle School & High School –
Monday, November 16, 2009

Time: 9am - 3pm

Location: Harbor Homes (The Institute at
Welcoming Light), Nashua, NH

Cost: \$95

Presenter: Cathy Apfel, M.Ed.

Voices of Friendship – How Schools Can Help or Hinder the Development of Social Relationships

This workshop will help participants learn to identify the barriers to friendship that exist in many schools and classes and provide a wide variety of strategies that schools and families can use to facilitate the development of friendships.

Date & Location: November 10, 2009 –
Audubon Society, Concord, NH

Time: 9am - 3pm

Cost: \$90

Presenter: Carol Tashie

Fundamentals of Inclusive Education

These workshops focus on the evidence and practice of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Additional dates in spring 2010.

Dates & Topics:

November 20: Is it REALLY Inclusion? Core Beliefs
and Best Practices in Inclusive
Education

Cost: \$99

December 10: Promoting Membership, Participation,
and Learning for Students with
Significant Disabilities in the General
Education Classroom

Cost: \$135 (includes a copy of Cheryl's new
book "The Beyond Access Model")

Time: 9am - 3pm

Location: Holiday Inn, Concord, NH

Presenter: Cheryl M. Jorgensen, Ph.D.

SAVE THE DATE

*"You're Gonna Love This Kid:
Educating Students with Autism in
General Education Classrooms"* and
*"Joyful Learning: Creating Active and
Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive
Classrooms"*

Dates: April 12-13, 2010

Presenter: Paula Kluth

RAP Sheet

The Latest in Disability Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Practice

Fall Issue 2009

NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 22, Room 290
Concord, NH 03301-2451

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- ◆ *Personal Stories*

DISABILITIES RIGHTS CENTER, INC.

18 Low Avenue, Concord, NH 03301-4971

Voice and TDD: (603) 228-0432 ◆ 1-800-834-1721 ◆ FAX: (603) 225-2077

TDD access also through NH Relay Service: 1-800-735-2964 (Voice and TDD)

E-mail: advocacy@drcnh.org ◆ Website: www.drcnh.org

"Protection and Advocacy System for New Hampshire"

The Disabilities Rights Center is dedicated to eliminating barriers to the full and equal enjoyment of civil and other legal rights for people with disabilities.

INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY/UCED – UNIVERSITY OF NH

10 West Edge Drive, Suite 101, Durham, NH 03824-3522

Phone (Tel/TTY): (603) 862-4320 ◆ Fax: (603) 862-0555 ◆ Website: www.iod.unh.edu

Institute on Disability/UNH – Concord

56 Old Suncook Road, Suite 2

Concord, NH 03301

Phone (Tel/TTY): (603) 228-2084

The Institute on Disability advances policies and systems changes, promising practices, education and research that strengthen communities and ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 22, Room 290

Concord, NH 03301-2451

Phone: (603) 271-3236 ◆ TTY/TDD: 1-800-735-2964 ◆ Website: www.nhddc.org

Dignity, full rights of citizenship, equal opportunity, and full participation for all New Hampshire citizens with developmental disabilities.

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