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**Creating a world in which the arts are universally accessible.**

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

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## Dear Friends,

As the Executive Director of VSA Florida, I am privileged every day to hear the impact our programs have on people with disabilities and their families. One grandmother stands out in my memory. Her grandson participated in a dance residency in Hillsborough County.

After eight weeks of lessons, his class was ready to perform onstage for students from other schools and their families. With tears in her eyes, the grandmother watched her grandson who had never danced before and never been on stage before perform with his class and exclaimed to me, "I saw my grandson move like I never knew he could. Thank you so much for such a special performance!"

We hope you enjoy this year's look back at everything VSA Florida accomplished and thank each and every one of you for your support!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Jennifer Sabo".

Jennifer Sabo, Executive Director



Over **55,600** people were directly served through **494** programs in **64** counties.



Over **40,000** students were impacted indirectly through teacher trainings.

**96%** of our programs were provided free of charge to the participants.

**3,320** students participated in **208** multi-week artist in residence programs.

**1,113** teachers, teaching artists, and cultural organization professionals received trainings on accessibility and accommodations.

**83** teaching artists were contracted to conduct programs and classes, injecting **\$183,662** into Florida's economy.

**91.4%** of our budget funded program expenses.



# Impact on Students with Disabilities



**VSA Florida's programs meet the needs of students with disabilities across the state.**

**Artist in residence programs address an average of 9 standards per residency.** Besides standards in the arts, classroom teachers felt standards in the language arts (94% of classes), mathematics (77%), and special skills (94%) were successfully addressed.

**Residencies increase communication skills.** 99% of classroom teachers felt the art lessons helped students express themselves in new ways and 98% felt students increased their communication and verbal expression.

**Residencies increase social skills.** 99% of classroom teachers felt the residency helped students learn to work cooperatively.





**Residencies increase cognitive skills.** 96% of classroom teachers felt the residency helped students increase their creative thinking and use of imagination, and 95% felt students increased their retention of information and/or skills and techniques.

According to classroom teachers, 75% of residencies for students in grades 9-12 provided opportunities to practice **transition skills**.

**Teacher professional development workshops and webinars increased student engagement.** 87% of participants felt the tips and techniques they learned increased student engagement in arts activities and 80% felt the increased engagement **reduced the need to remove students from their class due to behavior**.



*“Students were able to learn some new skills, explore new materials, and express themselves creatively - something we don’t always have time for with multiple levels and age groups in one classroom. Thank you for allowing us to participate.”*

**Bay County-Springfield Elementary**

# Artist in Residence Programs



Students with disabilities danced, sang, and sculpted their way to new or improved skills during **162 My Art MyWay school artist in residence programs**.

Partnerships with cultural organizations provided students once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, with **354** students exhibiting their artwork in a museum or gallery and **678** students performing on stage at a theater.





Students explored hidden talents and learned safe and appropriate ways to express their emotions during **46 residencies in Department of Juvenile Justice facilities.**

*“I discovered one girl IS AN AMAZING talented, natural artist. She has had difficulty with verbal & written comprehension & expression. HER JOY of drawing, painting, creating, and sharing - further developed her individuality & processing skills in my class. STEP BY STEP directions help her significantly. She smiles in the world of color!! Learning in a multi-sensory environment is essential.”*  
- Site Evaluation



*“Our students displayed a noticeable increase in communication skills, social skills, and fine/gross motor skills. By integrating the arts into our lesson plans, we as educators realized that it tapped into so many different interests, abilities, and forms of learning, making this a valuable professional opportunity.”*

**Miami Dade County-  
Hialeah High School**

# A New Definition of Dance



In October 2016, VSA Florida hosted the second year of “A New Definition of Dance.” **34 different activities occurred in three cities over two weeks**, including seven school or Department of Juvenile Justice workshops, 12 Master classes, five professional development sessions, five outreach workshops, and five performances, serving a total of 3,583 people.

*“It was an amazing experience. It inspired me to not be confined by preconceived ideas. In practicing so much technique, it is easy to forget why we dance to begin with. Ultimately, dance is a call from within. It’s moving, rhythm, and art. I would love to get more involved in more work like this. [It] changed my mindset on people with disability entirely.”*





### **Dancers included:**

- Breakdancers Luca “LazyLegz” Patuelli and Roya Abdol Hosini
- African musician and dancer Sidiki Conde
- World and European champions in wheelchair ballroom dancing Hanna Harchakova and Ihar Kisialiou
- DanceAbility® International founder Alito Alessi
- Award-winning Australian dancer Marc Brew
- Hai Cohen and Tali Wertheim from Israel’s Vertigo Dance Company
- Dwayne Schenueman and Merry Lynn Morris from the REVolutions Dance group
- Wheelchair dancers Frank Hull and Marcie Ryan
- Chinese classical dancer Liu Yan
- Karen Peterson and Dancers
- Sarasota Contemporary Dance, and more.

*“My favorite part of the performance was the total inclusion of my group of students with severe and profound disabilities. They were able to participate as equals.”*

*- Hillsborough County School Dance Workshop classroom teacher*



# Community Outreach



Two very talented teens with disabilities were selected as the **10th Annual Florida Young Soloist winners**: 17-year-old Jennifer Gordon from St. Johns County and 19-year-old pianist James Williams from Pasco County. The two artists were selected through a strict adjudication process facilitated by professors of music at the University of South Florida and Hillsborough Community College-Ybor.

Eighteen students with disabilities were recognized at a School Board meeting or school assembly for their outstanding artistry, personal growth and leadership in the arts during our **2016-2017 Student of the Month program**.





Dani Bowman, a 21-year-old Powerlight Studios' animator with Asperger's Syndrome, and Dr. Clint Randles, Associate Professor Music Education at the University of South Florida, taught 33 teens with Autism during our third annual **"Animation Gets Real" summer camp**. This camp combined animating, writing, storyboarding, and editing as well as music making through iPad application programs to create final short films.

Athletes became artists as we continued our five-year partnership with **Special Olympics Florida**. Over 960 athletes, families, and friends participated in accessible art activities during 13 Special Olympics' Spring Areas Games.

Our partners and affiliates across the state continued to provide unique VSA Florida programs to their communities, serving over 5,600 people through classes and festivals.

*"I am so grateful for this opportunity for Chase to experience animation camp by caring people. Thank you for all you do for our children. He will be talking about his experience for a long time."*

*Parent of teen attending Animation Gets Real camp*



With a focus on **preparing educators and cultural organizations to better include people with disabilities** in arts classes and cultural activities, 1,113 teachers, teaching artists, and cultural organizations' staff and volunteers attended 52 VSA Florida webinars and in-person trainings.

In 2016, VSA Florida's webinar series was revamped to focus on increasing skills and sharing strategies for teaching art to students with disabilities.

Webinars this year included:

- Making the Arts Accessible to Students with Multiple and Profound Disabilities
- Techniques for Including Students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders
- iPad Technology for Including Students with Disabilities in Music Activities
- Sculpture for ALL Learners
- Choice-Based Art Education for an Inclusive Classroom

**82% of VSA Florida training participants used the tips and techniques they learned in the training on a regular basis, and 85% felt the tips and techniques helped them in planning accessible lessons and implementing accommodations.**

Artists with disabilities on the **VSA Florida Artist Registry** participated in numerous exhibitions around the state, including exhibitions at Eckerd College, the Florida State Fair, Carrollwood Cultural Center, Gallery of the Blvd., Anne Marie Fine Arts Gallery and more. Sixteen pieces of art were sold during these exhibitions.



Registry artists also placed in nine Calls for Art, including the Gasparilla Music Festival Poster Contest, Pasadena Artspring Exhibition, Florida State Fair Art Show, and more.

VSA Florida continued our dance and movement program for adults with Parkinson's disease, serving 52 people through four multi-week sessions.

*“**Dancing Through Parkinson’s** has been great because Scott feels very comfortable in the group and it is a fun activity that we can do as a couple. We had been focusing on what we could no longer do but the class is giving us some new perspective on what is possible. It’s also so nice to be with friendly, optimistic and energetic people. Thank you for all you did to make the class available to us.”*



Thank you for doing  
art with us. you also  
made us learn how to make  
good art and that made  
my parents, uncles, and aunts  
amazed. MARCOS.



*“One of my girls was very shy about participating and needed a lot of prompting to participate. On the last day she actually participated most of the time with only a few prompts. The student has only spoke twice this year in school and on the last day, Ms. Nancy asked her to tell her an instrument that she would like to pretend to play and the little girl answered by saying piano. Wow, what a surprise.”*

- Site Evaluation

## I would like to help in the mission!

- \$10,000 to fund 20 artist in residence programs  
 \$5,000 to sponsor the Florida Young Soloist scholarship program for three years  
 \$1,000 to sponsor one Call for Art with cash prizes  
 \$500 to fund one artist in residence program  
 \$100 to sponsor one month of the Student of the Month program  
 \$\_\_\_\_\_ to VSA Florida's general operating fund

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I would like to support VSA Florida

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