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*Arts*  
ISSUE

# breaking ground

Issue 91



Council on  
Developmental Disabilities



A PUBLICATION OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN PARTNERSHIP  
WITH THE TENNESSEE ARTS COMMISSION AND BORDERLESS ARTS TENNESSEE



**Grimes**  
by Augie Collier

**Augie Collier** of Nashville tries to bring out the personality of his subjects. He enjoys using oils and acrylics.

**Sunset at Mesa Verde**

by Houston Vandergriff



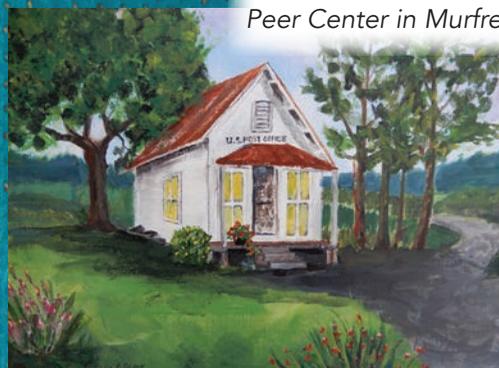
**Houston Vandergriff** is a 19-year-old with Down syndrome from Powell, Tennessee.

# COVER ART



**Autumn 11-11**  
by Kathy Tupper

**Kathy Tupper's** lifetime commitment is to honor the blessings she's been given: intellectual curiosity, imagination and the facility to use them.



**Nancy Olson** enjoys capturing everyday life in small towns and rural scenes in Tennessee. She enjoys painting in watercolors and creating art at Our Place Peer Center in Murfreesboro.

**Post Office**  
by Nancy Olson



## Welcome to the 2017-18 Arts Issue of Breaking Ground magazine!

Every year, we are delighted to feature amazing works of art from Tennessee's artists and writers with disabilities in this special issue. We feel privileged to share the creativity and voices of Tennesseans with disabilities and their family members, including many graduates of our Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute, with our Breaking Ground readership of nearly 5,000 subscribers across the state and country.

In addition to the beautiful prose, poetry, paintings, photography and other kinds of artwork in this issue, featured articles share stories about an inclusive dance class for children and their families at Ballet Memphis, a music appreciation program for teens through Chattanooga Therapeutic Recreation Services, and a community art project where artists with and without disabilities created mosaic artwork for the walls of an inclusive park in Hendersonville. We hope these stories of inclusive arts programming and initiatives happening in Tennessee will spark ideas for how your community might create more opportunities for individuals with disabilities to enjoy the arts.

We are grateful to our two co-sponsors for this special issue – the Tennessee Arts Commission and Borderless Arts Tennessee (formerly VSA Tennessee), a state organization on arts and disability. Both organizations are committed to increasing opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities to participate in the arts, and have been sponsors of our Arts issue for a number of years. We encourage you to connect with the Arts Commission ([tnartscommission.org](http://tnartscommission.org)) and Borderless Arts ([borderlessartstn.org](http://borderlessartstn.org)) to learn more about what they do!

Many thanks to the contributors to the Arts Issue and to the readers of Breaking Ground!

*Wanda Willis*

*Executive Director, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities*



## TN Arts Commission

Accessibility in the arts is about increasing opportunities for every age group to participate in arts programming/ activities. Here at the Tennessee Arts Commission, we share that commitment with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and Borderless Arts Tennessee.

To better serve the needs of older adults throughout Tennessee in 2017-18, the Tennessee Arts Commission partnered with fellow Tennessee Livability Collaborative members – the Tennessee Department of Health and the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability - to create a new state-wide initiative, Creative Aging Tennessee. Through this initiative, one-time seed money is specifically targeting older adults to increase participation in arts programming regardless of income, geography and/or ability.

Numerous studies have shown that participation in the arts provides excellent outcomes to improve health and wellness; create lifelong learning and engagement; connect older adults to their communities; and help to change perceptions about aging. What better way is there to improve cognitive functioning and reduce isolation than for older adults to participate in a theater production? Or, change perceptions about aging and disability through an arts-based, multi-generational program involving older adults and youth? These are just some of the nineteen (19) Creative Aging programs that were funded through this initiative. Visit our website at [tnartscommission.org](http://tnartscommission.org) for more information.

The Tennessee Arts Commission is proud to be a co-sponsor of Breaking Ground Arts Issue with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and Borderless Arts Tennessee, as we work to ensure that all people have an opportunity to participate and engage in the arts.

*Kim Johnson*

*Director of Arts Access*



## Borderless Arts Tennessee

Borderless Arts Tennessee (formerly VSA Tennessee) is honored to once again partner with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Tennessee Arts Commission on the special Arts edition of Breaking Ground magazine. Borderless Arts Tennessee is a statewide organization that works to promote educational curriculum, creative expression, career development, and community engagement through inclusive and accessible arts programs for people with disabilities. The opportunity to partner with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Arts Commission on the Breaking Ground Arts edition fits precisely into our mission as it showcases the artistic talents of people with disabilities across the state.

*Lori Kissinger*

*Executive Director*

# breaking ground



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**Boundless:  
Fashion for  
Every Body**

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# Dance

## Is a Universal Language

by Pam VanGilder

Children learn naturally through movement as they reach, touch and explore the spaces around them, from the smallest nook and cranny to the wide open expanse of space beckoning them to run, leap and twirl like a leaf on a windy day. In the Early



Childhood Inclusion Classes at Ballet Memphis, children ages two and older, along with their parents and siblings, participate in dance experiences that build on children's natural movement

and encourage self-discovery, expression, understanding and friendship. Dance is a universal language, spoken by everyone regardless of ability or disability. All are welcome.

Beginning in a friendship circle, each person takes a turn tapping the rhythm of their name on the drum, and in response the group claps and repeats their name back to them. They love playing the drum as the name game is transformed into variations of fast and slow, loud and quiet, hard and soft playing of the drum, each child playing their preferred drum beat. Another transformation and now I, the teacher, am playing the drum and the children and their parents are dancing to the drum beat, running feet, slow feet, stopping, going, tip toeing, jumping, forward, backward, sideways and around and around until we all float down to the ground. It is total engagement and active learning as they listen, respond and spontaneously move in different spatial directions with variations of tempo and energy.

Using nursery rhymes, chants and songs we now enter into the brain dance section of our class, which encourages the formation and strengthening of the developmental patterns that lay the foundation for all learning and movement skills. We breathe - filling our body with air and stretching out to our fingers and toes, and then letting the air out and pulling into a tight ball. We practice curving, stretching, bending and twisting our spine. We learn how to keep one part of our body still while moving another. We practice cross lateral movements and then we spin like a top waking up our vestibular system, then we slow down

**Movement, to be experienced, has to be 'found' in the body, not put on like a dress or a coat.**

— Mary Starks Whitehouse

and find our balance. We are focused, watching, practicing, remembering patterns, learning, repeating, thinking, making body and brain connections through our kinesthetic sense, learning what it feels like to move like a cat, pounce like a tiger, jump like a kangaroo, actively connecting words to movement while developing vocabulary and language.

And now it is time for the scarves, and Vivaldi. Improvisational dances that take us soaring through the air as we run and leap, twist and turn, sustain our movement as the violin slows, only to begin our flight as the violin once again picks up the tempo.

As our class draws to a close we come back to our circle for the Namaste Song by Kira Wiley, The Light in Me Sees the Light in You. During this song we acknowledge each of our friends as we pass a handshake and a smile around the circle. After the class parents and children

stay for awhile, share a snack; a time for parental encouragement and friendship.

The seeds for developing self-awareness through our movement, forming neurological body/brain connections for learning and social and emotional health must begin in early childhood and extend throughout our lifetime. It helps us stay connected to ourselves and to others. As Martha Graham said, "Dance is the language of the Soul."



*Pam VanGilder, a dance educator for over 25 years, has designed and presented dance education training for classroom teachers through the Wolf Trap Early Learning through the Arts Program and the Memphis-based Lincoln Aesthetic Education Program. She was the movement and dance specialist at Madonna Learning Center, a school for children and young adults with disabilities for 12 years. She also served on the National Dance Education Committee for establishing dance education standards for early childhood as well as developing accommodations for students with disabilities for the Common Cores Standards with the Kennedy Center VSA Program. Pam is a 2013-2014 graduate of the Council's Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute.*

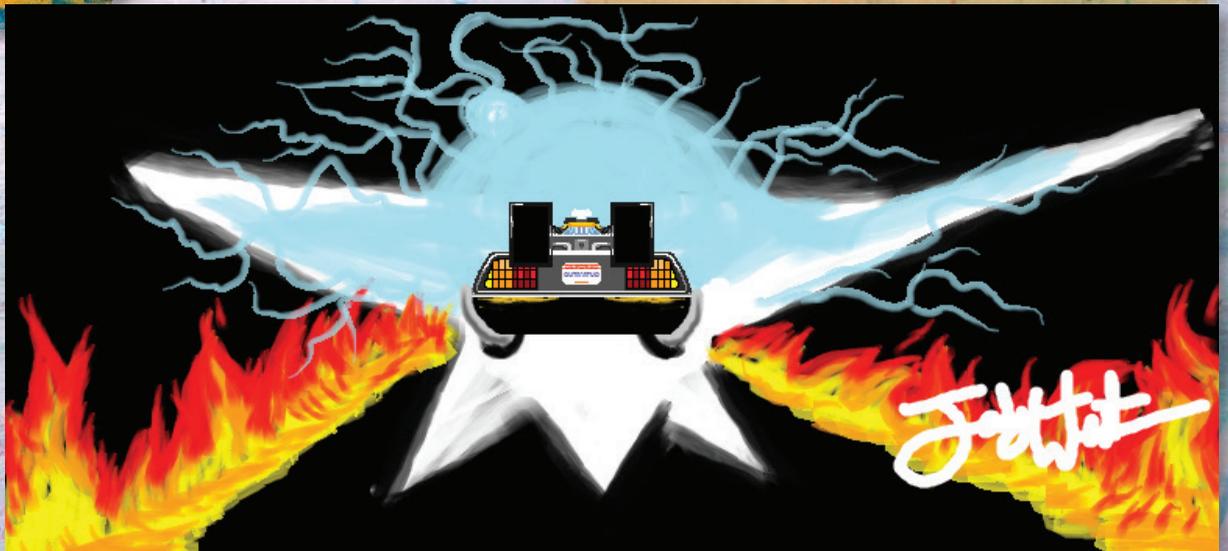


**Untitled 1**  
by Mitchell Wiseman

**Mitchell Wiseman** has his own unique way of expressing his artistic vision with abstract design filled with vibrant colors. He is a member of the ReConnect Peer Center in Shelbyville.

**BTF**  
by Jalyn Weston

**Jalyn Weston** is a 15-year-old artist with autism who lives in Sweetwater, Tennessee. He uses a variety of mediums from pen and pencil, from watercolor to acrylic, and more recently, digital.



by Lili Lyne

# Tunes and Teens:

Photos by Elaine Adams  
and Michelle Brickey

## Bridging Disability and Music Appreciation

Think back to a time when music moved you. A time when your favorite song, or a catchy beat physically moved you to sway or tap your toes and fingers. In these moments, time slows down and all that matters is the way you feel. I believe in music. I believe in the magical properties of music with an ability to bring people together with feeling, regardless of their similarities or differences.

This summer I interned with Chattanooga Therapeutic Recreation Services for 14 weeks. It was during my time at this wonderful agency that I was given the opportunity of a lifetime: to create a 4-week community program. I chose to serve the population of teens (13-19) with intellectual and developmental disabilities through an inclusive music appreciation program, Tunes and Teens.

It is a well-known fact in the recreation industry that teens are a very difficult demographic to market towards, with even less opportunities for teens with disabilities. However, I believe that music can accomplish anything. With strong support and guidance from my supervisors Michelle Brickey and Elaine Adams, I was able to catapult myself from the drawing board to a successful and unique program.

Tunes and Teens had four major components: icebreakers/introductions of musical guests, music theory games, everyday instrument crafts, and epic jam sessions involving guests and participants. It was important to me to have each session be both fun and educational. Through the music theory game High-Middle-Low, attendees differentiated high to low pitches while interacting with the musical guests. Then we crafted instruments from everyday household items. This not only kept our costs low, but simultaneously taught our participants how to make an instrument at home to enjoy with their family. Lastly, we put our instruments into "play" each week by creating live music in jam sessions with our volunteer guests who contributed their time and energy to help provide a memorable experience.

Our first week our musical guests were Drew Streip and Konstantine Vlasov of Caney Creek Company, a local



Lili Lyne (TR Intern) instructing a music theory game High-Middle-Low



Tunes and Teens participants pose week 3 with instruments from Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra

Drew Streip (Caney Creek guitarist) teaching a participant the anatomy of the guitar through touch and sound.



bluegrass band. During their visit we crafted box guitars and learned basic strumming patterns. Our second week we partnered with Jen Cooke and the lovely women of Scenic City Chorus. We learned about the history of barbershop quartet music along with the practice of "rounding", where a song is repeated by each vocal group at different times. To bring it all together, we made kazoos out of hair combs and wax paper to transform our voices into instruments.

The third week was a full-on instrumental theme. The Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra graciously donated 11 instruments for an evening along with educational handouts. This week was special in a number of ways. First, our participants were able to take their own recorder instrument home as a complimentary gift for attending the program. We were also able to attend Songbirds Guitar museum to learn the history behind a variety of guitars and the legends who used them. The museum's staff went above and beyond to make our attendees feel special and important by having this hands-on experience.

In our final week, brothers duo Matt and Lewis Omhag brought it all home by sharing their background in music, assisting us in making egg-shaker maracas, and helping facilitate a fun and experimental session with plenty of Michael Jackson's classic songs.

The program's success was validated by our feedback from participants, their family members and our musical guests. All parties wanted to know when Tunes and Teens would be offered next year. Though I will not be present for year two, I hope that other community members can use the framework I designed to continue the legacy of an inclusive music appreciation experience for teens with disabilities.

I want to thank my supervisors, musical guests, community members and all participants who helped make this program possible. The help and support from these inspiring people enabled me to reach the goal of creating a space for these wonderful young people to appreciate and express themselves through music. It was an unforgettable experience that I am sure to cherish the rest of my life.

In the words of the great Stevie Wonder, "Music is a world within itself, with a language we all understand."

# TO MY BATTERED SISTERS

By April Meredith

Control  
Such a simple concept  
With such complex origins  
And painful truths

Truth  
When intertwined with reality  
Fuels his rage  
And cloaks us in fear

But what is truth without the fear  
That sparks our courage  
To face reality  
To fight the monsters we invited

No matter the innocence  
It is that subconscious invitation  
That binds us tightest  
To our self-doubt and lies

We think ourselves weak  
Knowing deep within  
That we resent our own reflections  
More than him

Because we allow him  
To rape our souls  
Like a parasite  
He feasts off our heart  
And thrives on our pain  
And we dare not separate us from his grasp  
For we cannot bear the thought of causing his peril

His fate  
Is connected, dependent on, our own  
And surely this means  
Things would never go too far  
Surely he realizes this

But I tell you now, sisters  
A parasitic life is no life at all  
It's a mere existence  
Sustained on your blood  
And he is in no hurry to end the suffering  
Nor is he wiser than that battered face  
Screaming at you in the mirror

In fact  
The control you think you don't have  
And the strength you tell yourself is gone  
And the love you feel you don't deserve  
And the happiness you have long forgotten  
Or never had  
Is waiting for you  
When you are ready to face those demons

I will not give you false hope  
Nor unrealistic expectations  
Nor embellished promises  
For a clear passage  
Nonjudgement  
Or open arms  
Everywhere you go

Your journey would be  
Just as you are  
Beautifully unique  
Filled with simple complexity  
That is how one must be  
To take back and maintain control  
You understand its value  
Its power  
Better than any woman  
Who was granted it

It is time  
For you to wake up  
And seize what is rightfully yours  
I don't know where your journey will lead you  
But it will be yours  
I speak from the other side of the threshold  
Having survived my own hell  
And outlived my own parasite  
And conquered my own demons

I say to you  
That this sister stands  
Scarred, yet stronger than ever  
Ready to share your burdens  
Until you can carry them alone

Forward we can charge  
Collecting all the pieces  
Of your shattered spirit  
And replacing the lost ones  
With self-love and sisterhood

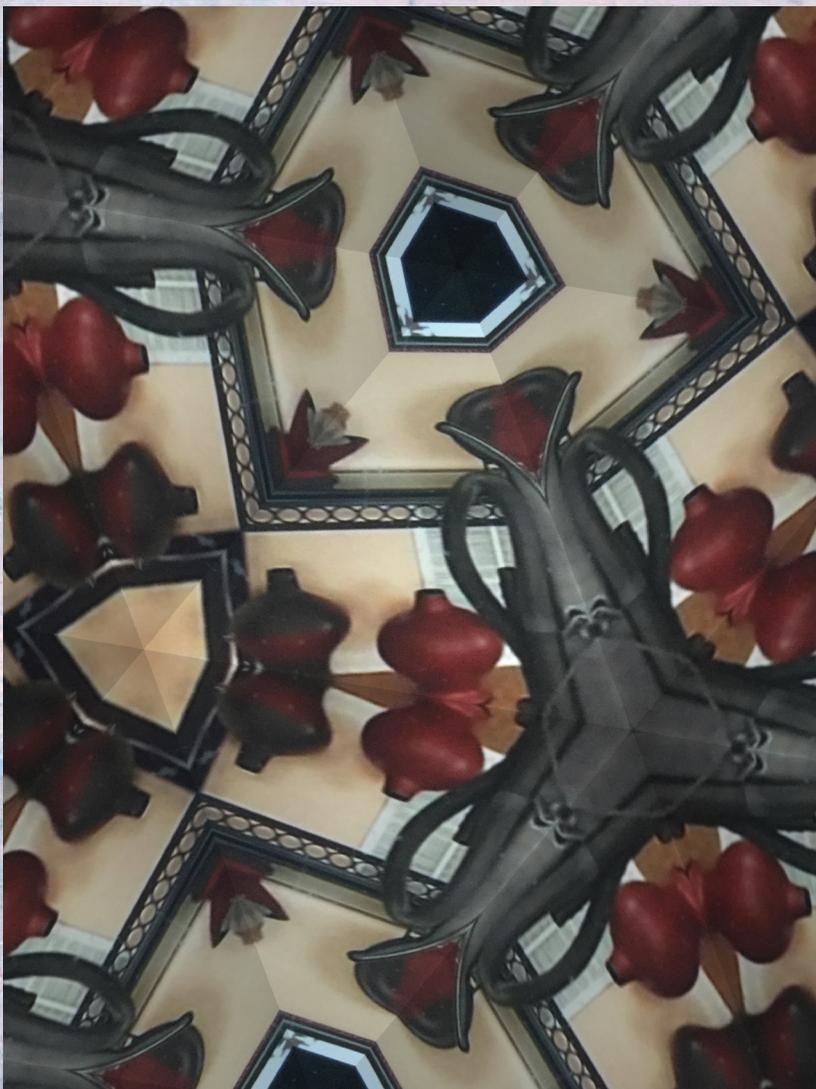
Rise up  
Just as you are  
You must make the first step  
Towards your brighter future  
That is the reality  
And believe me  
I get it  
It will be harder  
Than staying  
At first

But sometimes, sister  
In order to establish  
Who you are  
And commit to freedom  
You must go  
Through open doors

**April Meredith** is the Independent Living and Advocacy Specialist for Empower Tennessee. She is a wife, mother of three, and has Retinitis pigmentosa.

**Polka Dot Pinwheel**  
by Louise McKown

**Louise McKown** is a potter who has a rare progressive neurological condition that affects her speech, fine motor control, walking and balance. She retired from the East TN Technology Access Center at the end of 2016 after working 20 years as their public awareness coordinator and systems change advocate. She takes pottery classes at the Oak Ridge Art Center, where she also serves on their board of directors.



**Joey McNinch** is a 12-year-old on the autism spectrum who lives in Mount Juliet, Tennessee. He is a student at Kings Daughters Center for Autism in Columbia, and loves drawing and taking photos of vacuums.

**Untitled Vacuum #2**  
by Joey McNinch



# A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words:

by Jen Vogus

## Using Photography to Help My Son Communicate



I've always had a tendency to notice the more mundane things in the world around me, appreciate them and be affected by them. My experience as a parent of a child with a disability has really heightened this for me.

My son, Aidan, began having seizures shortly after birth due to a chromosomal deletion. His development lagged as the years went by. No matter how many doctors we saw, how much physical and speech therapy we did, and how much love and support we gave at home, he was not meeting those age-appropriate milestones.

Slowly, I began to understand the challenges Aidan would face and the degree of help and care that he would always need. My husband, Tim, is very involved, loving and supportive and by no means have I been alone in this journey. But as Aidan's mom, I felt responsible for all that Aidan had to endure and that it was up to me to find a "fix".

When Aidan entered elementary school, it became increasingly difficult for me not to compare him to the other students and constantly worry about what the future would

hold. The gap between Aidan and his peers grew wider each year and his world seemed to be shrinking. I saw families that could go out to a restaurant without their child melting down, whose calendars were not consumed with therapy appointments, who didn't deal with changes in medication dosages and their side effects, and more



profoundly, who were not woken in the middle of the night, every night, to comfort their seizing child.

I knew I had to tackle my negative thoughts and anxieties that were impeding me from being happy and living in the moment. That is when I decided to really embrace the "ability" part of disability. It didn't matter what the other kids were doing. It only mattered what Aidan was doing and, more importantly, how he was feeling. I set my mind to notice and focus on the little things more than ever - his infectious smile, his unbridled excitement when he saw someone mowing the lawn, his quiet focus as he watched a bug crawl by, and his amazing connection to and love for music. Because for kids like Aidan, and really for all kids, the

little things in life are the big things and they need to be celebrated.

Parents are their child's best advocate and this role is especially important when your child is non-verbal and has considerable physical challenges. At school, Aidan has limited ways to communicate with his teachers and peers, and they had trouble really knowing Aidan as a result. I shared Aidan's "little

things” verbally with his teachers and aides but the stories didn’t stick. I tried to think of a more permanent and tangible way for others to know Aidan.

I turned to photography – taking pictures of Aidan’s activities and passions. Aidan took the photos with captions to school to share with teachers and peers. It gave him a voice and illustrated his interests and capabilities in a way that was previously elusive.

Teachers and students were delighted to learn Spiderman is his favorite superhero, that he takes riding lessons on a white horse named Lady, that he can hold his breath and swim to the bottom of the pool, that he loves the thrill of the wildest rollercoasters, and that he gives his dad the biggest bear hugs of all. “That is so cool, Aidan! I like those things too!” students would say. The photos were not only a catalyst for him to build more lasting and meaningful relationships, but also helped me to realize he is more similar than different from his peers.

I began putting the photos in a book and that inspired others to contribute to it. His teachers and aides at school began taking photographs of Aidan throughout the day to share at home all that he does and enjoys at school. His photo book took on a life of its own; Aidan helped type captions, glued photos into the book and shared his visual stories with everyone. He now – as a sophomore in high school! - has a library of photo books documenting life at home and school from second grade onward.

As a result of taking these photographs of Aidan, I became more and more interested in the technical and artistic aspects of photography. I have always owned a DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera but was only a casual user, relying on auto settings. I immersed myself in learning the various settings to have creative control and obtain better exposures. Capturing Aidan’s “little things” has also made me grateful for an additional reason: it’s given me an outlet that is professionally, creatively and intellectually stimulating.

My goal in sharing my story is to inspire others to see and appreciate the “little things” in life and to use a device we all have at our disposal (a camera!) in a new way. It can be a powerful tool for change – building relationships, shaping perspectives and depicting the many abilities of people with disabilities.

*Jen Vogus is a 2006-2007 graduate of the Council's Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute. She is also a board member of The Arc Williamson County and teaches photography to students with disabilities. Check out her service dog photography exhibit, “Doggone Good!” at several Middle Tennessee venues in the upcoming months. Readers can visit her website at [www.jenvogus.com](http://www.jenvogus.com) for locations and dates and to view other work, and follow her on Instagram @jenvogus.*



# Harmony's Song

by LeTresa Payne

"What is that lovely sound?" Bailey, a newly hired staff member asked as I showed her around the semi-independent home where I served as Home Manager for several individuals with disabilities.

With a smile, I continued to guide Bailey down the brightly lit hallway towards one of my favorite client's rooms, Harmony J. "Follow me and you'll see."

As we stopped just outside of the open door to Harmony's room and peeked inside, we saw an African American lady of short stature in her late 30s standing near the window. She was humming a tune as the sunlight gently kissed her face through the window pane.

"This is Harmony," I whispered, not wanting to disturb Harmony's melody. "She wakes up singing with the birds who sit on the tree branch outside of her window every morning. It's simply amazing."

"Wow!" Bailey gasped, in awe. "That's a beautiful tune she's singing. I've never heard anything quite like it."

Nodding, I directed her back towards my office. Once we were inside, I closed the door and began telling her Harmony's story.

"When Harmony was just a baby, her parents were in a horrible accident and she was sent to the then-running developmental center to live. She has a diagnosis of Down syndrome and blindness, but has overcome any challenge that has ever darkened her doorstep. When she was just five years old some of the staff noticed that Harmony would wander off down the halls, feeling along the walls to guide her towards the huge day room in the building.

"Harmony had never spoken a word and refused to socialize with her peers, but as she sat alone in the day room, she would become extremely excited, smiling and giggling which was a rare treat from her. That warmed the staffs' hearts, so they continued to allow her to venture off to the day room with supervision.

"When I was her newly assigned provider, I followed Harmony down to the day room one morning and was surprised by what I saw: although she could not see, she placed her small hands on the glass window pane to steady herself as she pressed her ear up against the glass' smooth surface. Hearing the birds chirp merrily outside, she did that smiling and giggling we had seen before. Taking her by the hand, we ventured outside and stood in front of the tree where the birds sang majestically. Jumping up and down in excitement, Harmony opened her mouth and began to sing right along with them. The song had no words, but just to hear her sweet voice brought tears to my eyes. Until that day, no one had ever heard her voice. Everyone believed her to be nonverbal, but I had this feeling that she desired to speak. That morning I decided I would try to reach her and teach her how to speak...through music."

**LeTresa Payne** has been employed by the State of Tennessee for 10 years working in social services. She is a wife and published author of six novels.

"That's wonderful," Bailey replied, her blue eyes sparkling as she smiled warmly. "So, she learned to speak through singing?"

"Yes. Once I realized that she loved music, I brought in all the cassette tapes I could find with children's songs on them such as the alphabet and counting numbers. Each shift I shared with Harmony, I sat and played the tapes and would help her learn to form the words in the songs. Harmony would clasp her hands together and giggle while she rocked back and forth to the music. Each week we would work on words from different letters in the alphabet, until Harmony built up an extensive vocabulary. Pairing her up with another young lady who was also blind helped Harmony come out of her shell and socialize because she had finally found her words.

"Her voice was always there, she just needed to be taught how to use it."

After Bailey left to continue her rounds at the neighboring homes, I headed back to Harmony and escorted her to the day room. Inside sat a piano next to a large picture window. Taking a seat at the keyboard, I began to play a familiar tune which instantly brought a smile to Harmony's face. With the holiday season approaching, Harmony was excited about singing in the Holiday Showcase the State of Tennessee puts on for the residents each year. We had been practicing the song for weeks and I couldn't wait for Harmony to shine.

On the day of the Holiday Showcase, Harmony was a bundle of anticipation. She could barely contain her laughter as she clapped her hands and giggled in the van as we traveled with her staff and peers to the event. Once we were inside the building, Harmony began jumping up and down at the sound of holiday music filling the air.

When it was Harmony's turn to perform, her provider walked her up to the microphone on stage as I sat down behind the piano to play.

"Are you ready, Harmony?" I asked, and she nodded with a smile.

As my fingers danced along the black and white keys of the piano, Harmony belted out her version of "Oh, Holy Night" and the crowd went wild at the purity and beauty of her voice. When she finished there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd. Before she could be escorted off the stage, Harmony held the microphone up to her lips.

"I want to thank my home manager, Ms. Leah, for teaching me how to speak and never giving up on me. Happy Holidays everyone."

My mouth flew open and fresh tears stung the corners of my eyes. In all my years of working in this field, I have never been so touched. Watching Harmony blossom over the years has been thanks enough for me. For as long as I live, I will never forget Harmony's song.

# LESSONS

by DEB Clark

You have taught me patience. I was never a patient person until you came into my world, but it soon became obvious that I would need tons of it.

You have taught me that imperfection is okay. I watched as you struggled to do things; not perfectly, but however they turned out was just fine.

You have taught me to slow down. Sometimes in life, things don't move along as quickly as you think they should. Rome wasn't built in a day and you didn't meet the timelines that children "ought" to. You did things in your time.

You have taught me to fight. I've always been a fighter, but when you came along fighting took on a whole new meaning. I shouldn't have had to fight for some things, but it was the only way to get them.

You have taught me to find joy in small things. I have learned that small things bring the greatest joy of all.

You taught me how to play. Just because other children loved a certain toy or it was the biggest seller of the season didn't mean that you would enjoy it. It was always enough to just sit near you, sharing our playful rapport.

You have taught me that it's possible for a child to eat fried chicken, mashed potatoes and chocolate chip cookies and still survive. Hiding broccoli in your mashed potatoes was not a good idea.

You have taught me that watching the same movie over and over and over can be entertaining. Ditto for bedtime stories.

I saved the greatest thing that you have taught me for last. You have taught me that sometimes someone will come into your life and from that moment on everything changes. You can experience a love so intense, so life changing, so special that you will never ever be the same. You have taught me that love. My life has been changed by so many things since you became a part of my world; a world that is rich beyond imagination.

Thank you for being my teacher.

**DEB Clark** of Nolensville, Tennessee is the proud mother of Jesse, who is on the autism spectrum. Jesse is a much valued employee of Publix at McKays Mill in Franklin.

## Cheeky Rainbow Parrot

by Laura Hudson

**Laura Hudson** of Nashville loves to make people smile and enjoy her art. She says her art takes her anywhere in the world as she imagines beautiful tropical scenes and creatures. She loves to picture nature's gifts of life and beautiful color.



## Glacier Lagoon

by Houston Vandergriff





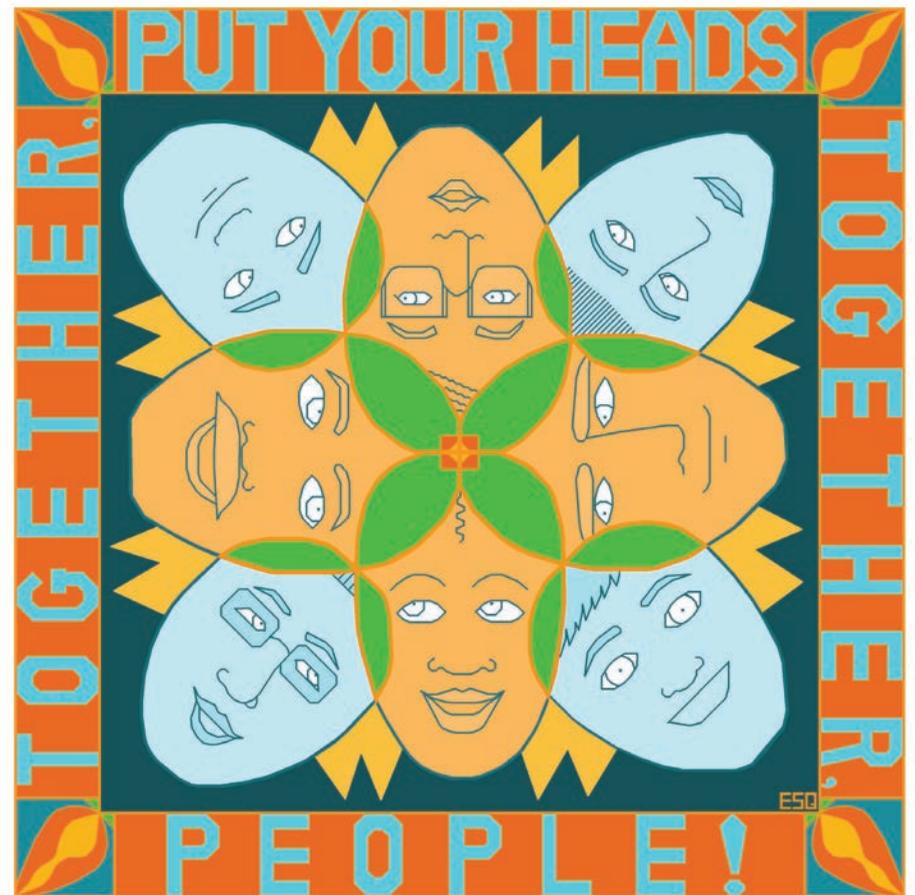
## Manipulation

by Kieran Braun

**Kieran Braun** is a senior at Carson-Newman University, majoring in graphic design and theatre arts. He was diagnosed with autism at age 3.

Nashville artist and writer, **Erin Brady Worsham**, was very happy to have her artwork chosen to be the program cover and t-shirt design for the 2017 Tennessee Disability MegaConference. This is the second time Worsham has received this honor.

**Put Your Heads Together People**  
by Erin Brady Worsham



# Much Ado about

by Kori Cupp

# MOSAICS

Photographs by  
Borderless Arts Photo



Memorial Park in Hendersonville, Tennessee will always be a significant landmark for the small town as music superstar Taylor Swift funded its playground. But three years ago, local artist Yvette Reneé noticed that the walls that surround the playground had become decrepit,

suffering years of weathering, vandalism and the flood of 2010. Yvette loved taking her daughter to this park, but every time they visited her eyes shifted towards those walls.

Yvette approached VSA Tennessee (now Borderless Arts Tennessee) with an idea of restoring the walls with mosaic art. The Hendersonville Parks Department was planning to tear the walls down, but in hearing the plan for the mosaics they were excited to become a partner on the project, and to be able to add a creative and unique look to the park.

The mosaic project had a special emphasis on including people with and without disabilities. VSA Tennessee coordinated many different groups to work on this project; most of those groups provide services to people with disabilities. However, four specific days were offered in the park so that anyone in the community could get involved. People of all ages and abilities came to assist by creating mosaic pieces.

Some of the scheduled organizations that worked on this project included: Project 22, Best Buddies Tennessee, New Horizons, Friends Life Community, Sign Club Camp, Summer Teen Center, Indian Lake Elementary School, Hendersonville Arts Council, HATS (Habilitation and Training Services, Inc.), Station Camp High School, and Pope John Paul II High School, and a group of home-schooling families. Also many other community volunteers including Girl Scout troops, Cub Scout troops, VSA Tennessee board members, and even the Nashville Predators joined in to support this lovely enterprise.





"This was a very special project for VSA Tennessee," stated VSA TN Director Lori Kissinger. "This project spanned a year from concept drawings to completed installation and involved hundreds of individuals with and without disabilities. We have offered many programs of which I have been very proud, but this has definitely been the most publicly visible, which will always give it a special place in my heart."

The July 29 Community Day was extra special. Not only was the first finished mosaic wall revealed, but members and staff of the Nashville Predators helped cut glass for those making mosaics and Gnash, the Predators' mascot, made a surprise appearance! The Nashville Predators along with the Tennessee Arts Commission, Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, and Memorial Foundation helped this project be a success with their financial contributions. This project would not have been possible without their generous donations.

This project has been a community endeavor that will remain a testament to the power of the arts to promote inclusion and beautify a community.

*Kori Cupp is a student at MTSU and has served as a VSA TN Intern.*



# Juggling Words

my circle  
is square today

my up will be  
sideways tomorrow

my smile keeps matching  
the color of your eyes

my good is best when i juggle  
sixty-four words at once

see how high  
i am throwing them

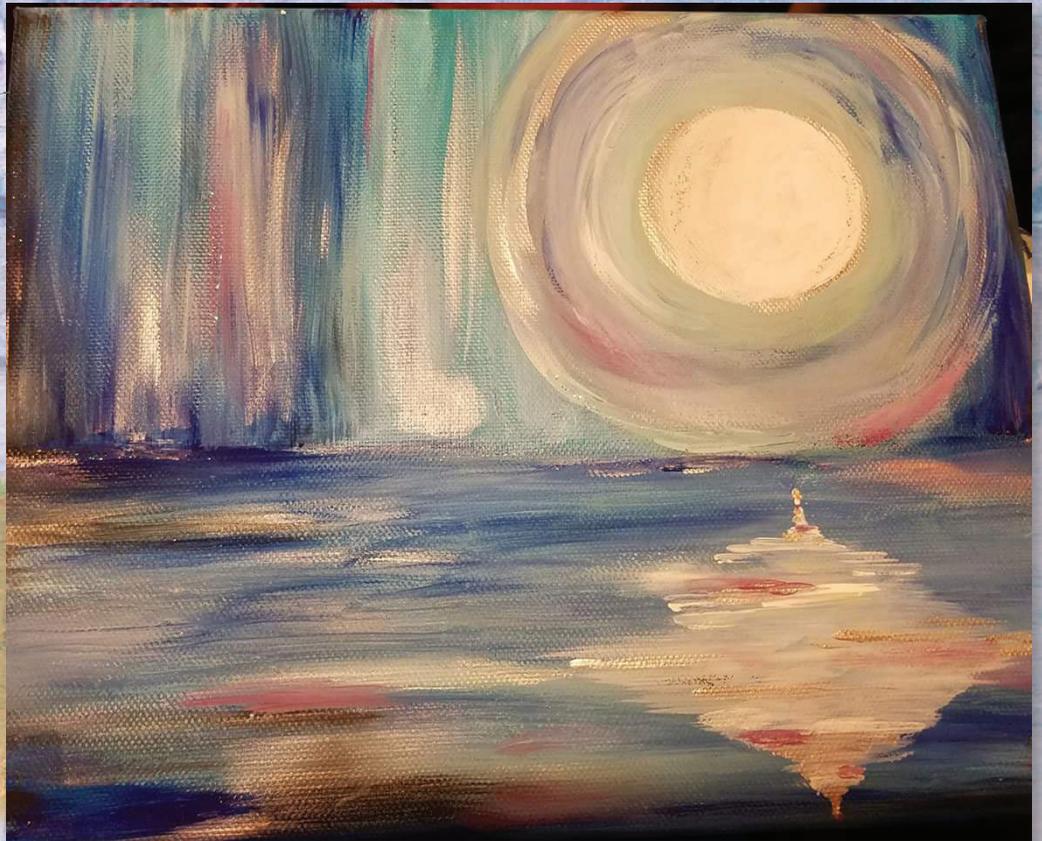
into the air beside your ear  
and the air inside your heart

someday i will throw my words  
over the moon and over the sun

**Nathan Spoon** is a poet with learning and developmental disabilities whose poems appear in Oxford, Stanford, Yale and Durham University publications. He lives in Joelton, Tennessee.

**Untitled #2**  
by Christy Earheart

**Christy Earheart** is a licensed master social worker who never tires in her pursuit for social justice and equality. She is a mother, Partners graduate, animal lover and volunteer who just happens to sit on wheels.



**John L. Butts, Jr.** of Clarksville enjoys drawing faces of people. He attends the Centerstone Peer Center in Clarksville.

**Over Easy**  
by John L. Butts, Jr.

# Boundless: *Fashion for Every Body*

Event photos by Clint Searcy, Jeffrey Bryan and Patrick Webster

On September 9, Fashion is for Every Body and Empower Tennessee, Middle Tennessee's Center for Independent Living, presented Boundless, Nashville's only inclusive fashion runway show. This exciting event which took place at Studio 615 featured adult models of all ages, shapes, sizes and abilities wearing collections by some of Nashville's best and brightest fashion designers.

Several of the local designers have previously shown collections at Nashville and New York Fashion Weeks. Local newcomers 3van 6rey, Opium and adaptive clothier Habitus presented debut collections. Veterans Catland Forever Couture, Ola Mai and Lily Guilder demonstrated why they are mainstays in the Nashville fashion landscape.

Models ages 18 to 50+, sized 00 to 20 and those with physical disabilities shared the same runway as their able-bodied and professional modeling colleagues. The well-attended event featured a special tribute to Kimmie Jones, a staff member of Tennessee Disability Pathfinder who passed away in 2017. She was a passionate supporter of Boundless and its inclusive philosophy.

For more information, visit [fashionisforeverybody.com](http://fashionisforeverybody.com).



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500 James Robertson Parkway  
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**Post Office**  
by Nancy Olson