

## Artists Creating Together Final Report for Robert Nelson Foundation

September 10, 2020

Artists Creating Together thanks you for investing \$10,000.00 into programming for individuals with disabilities. Over the course of the grant period, we were able to offer the following:

### **Art Enrichment**

Groups of students from area Community Enrichment Programs, received art instruction in both visual and performing arts. They have received creative programming at their school site, within the ACT studio and throughout the community at arts and cultural site visits. Art forms have included drumming, creative movement, mixed media, charcoal basics, music explorations, theatre, printmaking, acrylic portraits, improv, and watercolor painting.

Each art form was delivered via instruction covered in a four-week segment, with four sessions in each art form. These art forms were based on requests made by pulling information from students about artistic interests. In addition to instructional classes, a variety of guest speakers have visited the students, including local musicians, gallery owners, local actors, and representatives from ArtPrize. Students have also gone on site visits to Lions & Rabbits Gallery, the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids Circle Theatre, and The Comedy Project to further their exposure to the arts and cultural opportunities.

### **Art Intensives**

A class of students took an intensive dive into three art forms over the school year. In the first segment, students focused on Drawing and Perspective, and learned about 2- and 3-point perspective, and also created a collaborative piece. This collaborative was entered in the ACTion Art Exhibit, our exhibition that showcases the work of adult artists with disabilities from our community and beyond. In the second segment, Theatre Basics & Storytelling, students learned basic theatre techniques and created an original drama called “The Royal Dilemma.” For this production, students generated their own characters, back stories, and plotlines. They used clay to create props and chose their costumes from a selection generously loaned to ACT by local theatre companies. This student group then performed the show for over 100 students, family members, and staff. They also led an impromptu panel to talk about what they learned, their character choice, and other topics for the audience.

### **Apprentice Cohort**

In a year-long segment, classes were offered for students who have developed their art skills and have shown interest in becoming a professional artist and supplementing their income through their art. In this apprentice cohort, ten individuals embarked on the path to become artists that show and sell their artwork within our community. The students have spent weekly classes on developing their own individual styles and pursue their preferred artforms.

Each apprentice developed their own logo for business cards and had a headshot taken. The apprentices curated a collection of art for display and sales at various shows and receptions. Sales of apprentice artwork were done virtually this year due to school and studio closures to the public, with record sales (which go to the apprentices).

The apprentices created a collaborative weaving project based around the theme of “Discovery” led by teaching assistant Maggi Paxton, a fiber artist. Apprentices were also visited by a panel of established artists with disabilities and given the opportunity to ask the panel questions about their work, process, and life as an artist.

To wrap up our program year, ACT pivoted during COVID-19 to offer a number of virtual opportunities during this time for participating students in these program areas. This included:

- A [#StayHome #StayCreative YouTube playlist](#) - with weekly lessons from teaching artists for guided activities during this time
- A [pop-up web shop](#) to sell art merchandise on behalf of our transition-aged apprentices
  - One young man part of the apprentice group, Carson, helped us create this [promotional video](#)
- Our [ACTion Art Exhibit](#) (open to any artist with a disability aged 18+) moved to a virtual platform from the usual exhibit at the Grand Rapids Art Museum. This includes several entries from students participating in our transition programs
- Greeting cards were mailed to many of our students who participate regularly to reach out while they are stuck at home without the usual activities
- Launching monthly [Open Studio Anywhere](#) video workshops and packets in place of our usual open studio nights

**Grant funds supported the costs of:**

- Site visit admission, fees, etc; for venues
- Student community service-based projects (transition student volunteer groups), including collaborative art displays, and holiday cards for residents at Grand Rapids Home for Veterans, beautification projects
- High-quality consumable art supplies for all students in all three program segments
- Creating artwork prints and greeting cards, for artists to sell in the apprentice program (artists will keep 95% of gross income from sales, minus credit card and accounting fees incurred – no administrative fees to ACT)
- Covering a portion of the costs to have an art assistant in the apprentice program to provide further one on one support for students
- Virtual webstores
- Virtual teaching artist productions

We sincerely thank you for your generous support. The face to face and then virtual and remote instruction that we provided over the past year has impacted the lives of many young adults. The ability to continue to reach these developing artists within their homes and classrooms virtually, has been a tremendous success.

Sincerely,



Angela Steele  
Executive Director

Thank you  
for supporting  
ACT!