

# THIS WEEK

Section B

BERKSHIRE RECORD • MAY 13-19, 2011

## CATA's outreach program growth is...stunning!

*This weekend, CATA will hold its annual gala performances at Shakespeare & Company's Founders' Theatre in Lenox.*

GREAT BARRINGTON – “With the arts, especially the performing arts like dance, there is no judgment – no right way, wrong way,” explains Sandra Newman, the founder of Community Access to the Arts (CATA). “There is just the experience of doing it, the joy of it. It's a way for individuals to find their talents and abilities, and for us – the audience – to honor and celebrate them.”

This view of the value of artistic expression is at the core of how Newman transformed a career as a dance movement therapist, trained at Antioch College in Keene, N.H., into the leadership of an organization unique in integrating visual and performing arts into the lives of individuals with disabilities.

In the past 18 years, the growth of CATA's community outreach has been nothing less than stunning. From its humble beginnings in Stockbridge – 12 women from Riverbrook Residence taking a workshop with textile artist Wendy Rabinowitz -- it now encompasses five performing arts companies, with a faculty of 21 local artists who guide more than 1,000 workshops in 31 settings throughout the Berkshires.

CATA serves about 600 people of all ages, though the majority are adults.

“Our intention is to send a universal message of inclusion, and to honor people for what they do well,” she explains, seated in CATA's spacious office on the second floor of 40 Railroad Street in Great Barrington.

“When I first moved to this area, I worked in Hudson, New York, at a mental health facility, and it struck me that what I wanted was to bring people out into the community – people with all kinds of disabilities – into community settings,” she said.



Eddie Allen

**Sandy Newman Founder director of CATA**