
CATA Annual Report

March 13, 2015



CATA Artist: Dottie

Dear Cata Friend,

As we spring into 2015, CATA continues to break new ground with dynamic programs and events. We thought that, as a generous supporter of our mission, you might enjoy hearing more about CATA's recent accomplishments. We hope this Annual Report sheds some light on the incredible impact you have made on our organization, for which we are truly grateful.

Now in our 22nd year, CATA continues to bring to life Founder Sandy Newman's vision of nurturing and celebrating the creativity of people with disabilities all across Berkshire County. CATA's innovative arts programming is thriving, with new partnerships being established, new settings joining our work, and new CATA artists flourishing.

Over the past year, CATA has worked to launch new programs that deepen the experience for our artist-participants. We've debuted a new team-taught approach to our Writer's Workshop, where artists with disabilities work closely with scribes to write poetry and stories that allow them to share their unique perspectives. We've also introduced new workshops in other genres including an advanced yoga class, a new session of ARTiculations, a visual arts workshop, and an introductory-level Tap Rhythms workshop (to augment our more advanced, performance-based troupe, Tap Murmurs).

Your support has been crucial to this ongoing success. Because of donors like you, CATA has been able to sustain its trailblazing work in bringing arts and culture to nearly 600 people with disabilities across Berkshire County.

Financial Position



CATA is committed to providing transformational arts programs amidst a challenging economic climate. We continue to uphold the distinctive funding model that allows us to serve a population that is largely low-income.

So many of the people with disabilities whom we serve have limited funds; CATA charges artists and settings only 50% of the true costs of programming. Rather than turn away artists who would otherwise not be able to afford workshops, CATA actively pursues grants and other fundraising in order to provide subsidies and scholarships wherever necessary.

The nature of our work requires an investment of time and resources. Workshops require skilled, professional Faculty Artists who are not only highly effective teachers but who can establish a rapport and connection with our artists. Coordinating with 37 community partners also requires a professional, highly organized staff. We are proud to say that CATA has been able to invest in these areas while also maintaining a tight control over costs.

Through the strong support of our community, settings, and funders CATA retains a financially strong position. Our total operating expense during the past fiscal year was \$590,000, 78% of which went directly to support our programs. We continue to see an increase in both earned and contributed revenue, with new supporters contributing to both the CATA gala and the annual appeal. We are grateful for the generosity of our community: fully 60% of our total income is contributed by individual donors. Our net assets continue to exceed liabilities and we are fortunate to have six months of operating revenue in reserve.



Accomplishments

- CATA successfully transitioned to a new Executive Director, Margaret Keller, in February 2014. As part of a carefully conceived transition plan (two years in the making), Margaret and Sandy worked together closely during the first few months of Margaret's leadership so that Sandy could personally share CATA's history.
- CATA provided 1,024 workshops in 37 settings, serving 600 people with disabilities. Six settings were new and nine settings expanded program. Two individuals with exceptional talents and interest in a particular area of the arts began one-on-one lessons.
- CATA hosted a site visit by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and shared the organization's transition plan as a model to be distributed to other organizations.
- Founder Sandy Newman was honored at the "CATAtude" gala.
- The audience at the annual performance filled the Tina Packer Playhouse at Shakespeare & Company, and the gala raised a record \$187,000 for CATA through sponsorships, tickets sales, and our unique donation "auction" gifts.
- The annual art opening at Berkshire Museum saw a record attendance of 335 people.
- CATA was invited to exhibit at The Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Berkshire Museum, the Lamont Gallery at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and Pittsfield City Hall.

- With funding from Massachusetts Local Cultural Councils, CATA produced an audio book version of “going for a flower,” a poetry anthology which was distributed to local libraries in the Berkshires in order to share CATA’s mission with a broader public.
- New or renewed partnerships were forged with a number of settings, including Wahconah Regional High School, Pittsfield High School, BFAIR Family Support Center on Eagle Street in Pittsfield, BCARC’s Social Development Center in Dalton, and others.
- CATAdirect created the first “Summer Intensive” in which community members and artists with disabilities worked side by side to create a collaborative art project for public display. Together, participants created four stunning felted murals, which will be hung at the Triplex & Beacon Cinemas later this year.

Because of partners like you, we have been able to confidently plan for the future, increasing programming by 5-10% while bolstering our staff resources. In the year ahead, we will explore further opportunities for artistic innovation and for integrative, collaborative projects, while also working to secure funding for important underfunded programs such as A.R.T., CATAdirect, and Art on Tour.



Reviews

Each year, greatnonprofits.org (in collaboration with Guidestar) collects reviews on nonprofit organizations. We are pleased to share some of our reviews with you:

*We have been supporters of CATA for about four years. We have been impressed with the way we have been appreciated and welcomed into the CATA community. The staff are the most warm, loving, caring people we have ever met. It really makes you feel there are no limits to what everyone can accomplish if given the opportunity. The spirit and inclusion of everyone is contagious. Thank goodness for CATA!! -- **Stephanie and Bob Gittleman***

*I've been involved with CATA for over 20 years, and in all my experience with non-profits I've rarely seen anything that compares in terms of faith to its mission, bang for the dollars raised, and sheer joy of involvement for everyone involved. There aren't enough check-boxes to describe my connection to this magical organization--I've been a board member, board president, a faculty member, an audience member, a parent of a participating dancer and a volunteer, to name a few hats. Always true to the guiding star of celebrating individuals and highlighting the common humanity that unites us all, CATA is also perpetually leading, innovating and gently pushing us all towards a more connected future. – **Janet Elsbach***

I was lucky enough to intern at CATA for almost a full school year and witness the immense positive impact CATA programs have on all people involved. The artists with disabilities are valued members of the CATA team and treated with real respect. For me, it was really the first time I saw people with disabilities being treated as

capable adults rather than children. One class I was in, I remember one of the artists saying, "I wish the rest of the world treated me like a person too." Really opened my eyes. What CATA does, at the heart of it, is simple—values individuals who aren't usually taken seriously by the rest of our society. What a beautiful job they do! Incredible environment, stunning art and writing and some of the kindest, most interesting people you'll meet. Everyone involved in this important work grows from the experience. – **Catherine Wessel**

CATA's workshops at Blue Q continue to be amazing. We employ a staff of fifteen people through Berkshire County ARC, and we've learned through CATA every one of them's a true artist in some manner. CATA's programming is creative and life changing, with wide-ranging benefits to our community at large. CATA is also SO capably run, by a lean, resourceful, crazy-talented team that makes every dollar count!! One of the most important arts orgs on the local map!!! Go CATA! -- **Mitch Nash**

Impact

We'd like to share with you a short story of transformation from our most recent program year:

Up until a few years ago, Scott T. was unable to participate in large group activities. Several years ago the director of his household expressed that Scott was curious about CATA's theatre class. He joined and successfully participated in our GALA performance...his stage presence is innate! He then increased his participation by enrolling in our Writer's Workshop. In 2012, his poetry was included in going for a flower, CATA's first poetry anthology. Scott became so involved in the writing class, he brought in poetry to share with the class. **In May 2014 he made his debut as a stand-up comedian, performing his own material in CATA's annual performance in front of hundreds of people.** Scott's progression is a shining example of what can happen for a creative individual who happens to have a developmental disability. The combination of his talent, the input and energy of his residential staff, and CATA's programs and advocacy produced tremendous personal growth. Scott (left) with ASL interpreter (right).



Remarkable as it is, Scott's story is one of many among the 600 CATA artists with disabilities whose lives have been transformed because of your support. Through your ongoing generosity to CATA, you join us in recognizing and nurturing the creativity of CATA artists, strengthening our message that the arts are vital to ALL.

We hope that in the year ahead, you'll be able to join us at the CATA gala and other events where together, we can witness and celebrate the artistry of our CATA community. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out for any reason. We'd love to hear from you by phone (413.528.5485) or email (Margaret@communityaccesstotheARTS.org).

Thank you again for your generous support of CATA.

Sincerely,

Margaret Keller
Executive Director