



NEWS

**FALL 2023 *and*
WINTER 2024**



The power of GENEROSITY

Artists like Michelle let their creativity soar at CATA.
YOU make our programs possible!

"At CATA I feel happy and accepted – I can be myself."

Your gifts bring life-changing arts programs to people with disabilities now.



On a Tuesday afternoon, CATA artists gather for a dance class. Katherine takes her place at the front. As the music starts, the class turns its attention to her, and she begins to lead a warm-up dance. Soon, everyone is moving together, following Katherine's lead.

Katherine has had a passion for the arts her entire life. But finding her place as a young adult, and growing and developing her talents, has been difficult. "Katherine is a natural artist," say her parents, Mary and Paul. "But she's craved more opportunities to expand her skills and experience."

Entering adulthood is hard for most young people—and especially for young people with disabilities. Many support systems they rely on in school disappear after graduation. Parents of children with disabilities often talk about how leaving high school is like "falling off a cliff."

When Katherine started taking CATA workshops, a CATA faculty artist saw her talents and encouraged her to dig deeper. Faculty and fellow CATA artists listened as Katherine talked about her love of dance, and cheered when she shared new dance steps she created. Suddenly, Katherine felt accepted like never before.

"CATA gives me the opportunity to do a lot of things," says Katherine. "I feel happy and accepted. I can be myself. I can be a part of it all."

"We're watching Katherine blossom right in front of us!" say Mary and Paul.



Recently, Katherine got a phone call. CATA was planning a new dance workshop, and she was invited. Not just to join, but to help **teach** the class. Now, this young woman searching for her place in the community was being recognized in a whole new way.

"To have CATA recognize Katherine's talents—to welcome her and want her to be part of something bigger and better—what an incredible opportunity," says Mary. "We're watching her blossom right in front of us."

"We all hear buzzwords about inclusion. Now here's an organization that's really doing it."

"CATA makes people with disabilities feel as important and included as members of society as they should be," says Mary. "The commitment, inclusion, love, care, and support radiate."

Please give today to bring life-changing programs to artists like Katherine. We can't do this work with you.

We need your help to reach 1,000 people with disabilities in 2024!

Right now, demand for CATA is at an all-time high. Families, schools, and disability agencies are asking CATA to expand programs. People with disabilities are craving more opportunities to express who they are.

Donate today and your gift could be DOUBLED, thanks to a Match Challenge!

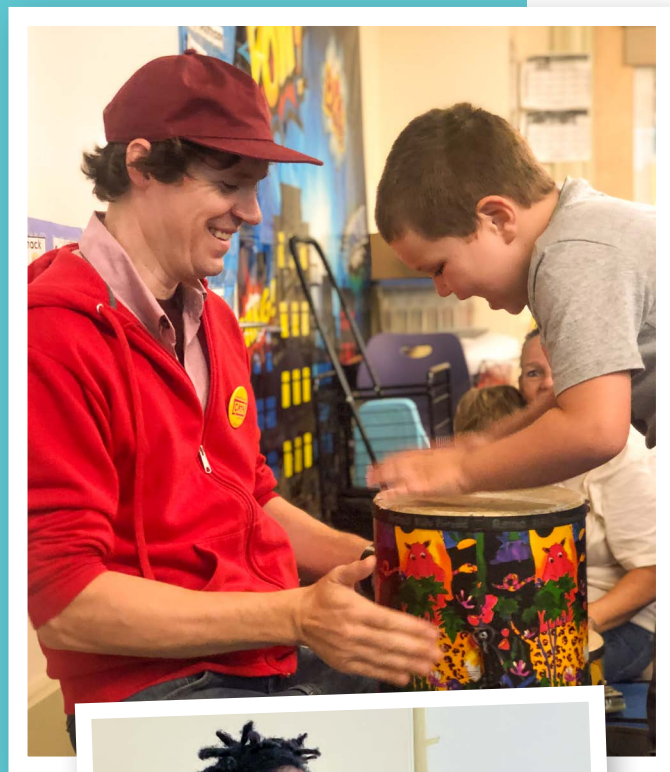


Give online at
CATAarts.org

You bring CATA ALL across our community!

Katherine is one of 1,000 CATA artists—children, teens, and adults with disabilities—finding joy through CATA. Take a look at ALL the places you can find CATA in our community!





Back to School:

YOU bring CATA to the Classroom!

At Lee High School, students Liam and Cam are learning science-themed dance steps in a CATA workshop. “We’re just like the planets!” says Liam. “What do planets do?” asks Beth, a CATA faculty artist. Liam and Cam start their Solar System Dance— orbiting each other and using their arms to show the pull of gravity.

For hundreds of students with disabilities, CATA is a vital part of their school curriculum. Children and teens from Great Barrington to Dalton to Pittsfield to Cheshire to North Adams count on weekly CATA programs as a way to express who they are, build life skills, and meet their educational goals.

“CATA school programs help students grow and develop across every facet of their life,” says Jeff Gagnon, CATA Program Director. “We work closely with school administrators to understand students’ needs and interests, and then design arts programs that support their goals and connect to their classroom curriculum.”

In dance, music, juggling, yoga, acting, and painting, students build strong social and communication skills, work on balance and coordination, relieve stress, and develop self-confidence and well-being.

As students’ needs have grown since the pandemic, so have CATA programs. “Demand for CATA has skyrocketed,” says Jeff. “Teachers, administrators, families, and students are asking for more CATA programs than ever. This year, we’re working to reach over 300 students with disabilities across nine school districts.”

“When you have a child with special needs, it’s important to know that there’s an organization that does so much to support individuals with disabilities. **Through CATA, we get to see parts of our daughter that we might not have known.**”

-Terri & Terry, parents of a young CATA artist

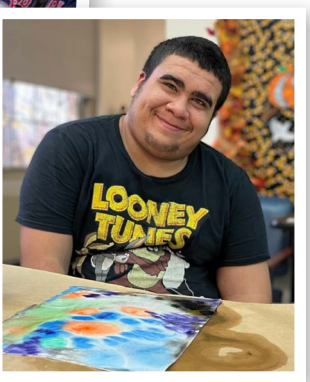
BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS:

“A student in my classroom had a goal of successfully engaging in cooperative play with others,” says Suzan Hyndman, a teacher at Pittsfield High School. “In CATA, he was fully engaged with his classmates— and having a ball!”

“I am so grateful for CATA. It’s the highlight of my students’ week. Each workshop is a breath of fresh air that allows them to experience meaningful, real-life connections.”

CONNECTING WITH CURRICULUM:

“There are so many ‘aha moments’ with CATA,” reflects Amy Mandel, a special education teacher at Colegrove Elementary School in North Adams. “During music and dance workshops, my students are now able to pick up the pattern with musical instruments and their own body movements. This skill is so helpful to reinforce the pre-math skills we teach. My students take parts of their CATA activities and bring it back to use in the classroom.”



Your support fuels CATA arts programs for hundreds of students in local schools

NURTURING SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

Recently, CATA has expanded workshops for students in alternative learning programs. CATA faculty have developed trauma-informed approaches for students who require more support and a personalized learning experience.

“CATA has been perfect for my group,” says Meghan St. John, a teacher with the Positive Options Program in Pittsfield. “Through CATA, they’ve found a gateway to comfortable social interactions that otherwise would likely not take place. It’s an outlet for them to decompress. And they’re very proud of the work they create.”

“CATA school programs are an investment in our community’s future,” says Jeff.

“These workshops give young CATA artists the same opportunities for creative exploration as their mainstream peers. **Everyone deserves access to the arts.**”



Because of you, students with disabilities are tapping into their talents and building life skills in CATA workshops.

Your support brings CATA to children, teens, and adults with disabilities across our community. Please make a gift today to help keep these vital programs going.

CATA supporters Gary & Arlene Schiff:

"Supporting CATA is a WIN"

For Gary and Arlene Schiff, giving back to their community is a personal and professional calling. When they attended CATA's Annual Performance in 2019, they knew this was a way they could put their calling into action.

"Right from the start, CATA blew us away," says Gary, Managing Director of October Mountain Financial Advisors. "It's powerful to realize that an organization like CATA exists in our community and what a gift it is to so many people."

"We're amazed to see the incredible range of ways that people express themselves through CATA," says Arlene, who serves as National Director of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's *Life & Legacy* program and formerly served as Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. **"We see the joy that the artists get from CATA.** And were it not for CATA, we know they may not have this opportunity."

"These opportunities need to exist. CATA needs to exist."

Gary and Arlene are true CATA-omnivores—they love to see CATA in action in every way they can, from poetry readings and art exhibits to CATA's annual performance. Of all of the art forms, though, the visual arts hold a special place in their hearts.

"My undergraduate degree is in art history, and we both have master's degrees in the design field," says Gary. "I find it incredible to see the range of expression that CATA artists put into

their artwork. It's astonishing how many people are included in the exhibits, and the sheer quality of the work on display."

"One of the things we love about CATA is how well they share what they do with the community," adds Arlene. "Many nonprofits talk about impact, but you don't always get to see it firsthand. CATA creates so many opportunities for us to see the difference they're making. The impact of their work is tangible."

CATA's mission of inclusion aligns perfectly with Gary and Arlene's values—and also with the philanthropic goals of Gary's business, October Mountain Financial Advisors. So much so that October Mountain has been a loyal supporter of CATA's art exhibits for many years, including as underwriters of CATA's art shows at the Clark Art Institute and Lichtenstein Center for the Arts.

"When we established October Mountain Financial Advisors, we knew that we wanted to give back to the community," says Gary. "From a business standpoint, supporting CATA is a win."

Getting involved with CATA has opened up a new perspective for Gary and Arlene on their community. **"Until we got to know CATA, we had no clue there was such a large population— and such a broad range—of people with disabilities in our area."** We see how CATA is providing opportunities to people with disabilities to express themselves in so many ways."



At the heart of it, Gary and Arlene support CATA because they want to make their community stronger for everyone. "We want to be an inclusive and accessible community. So these opportunities need to exist. CATA needs to exist."

The first time we encountered CATA, we thought: 'How could we not support this organization after seeing the difference they're making?'

Gary and Arlene say, **"We knew it was the right thing to do—to help bring CATA to as many people as possible."**

Join Gary & Arlene and make a gift to support the talents of CATA artists.



JoAnne (BFAIR) taps into her talents through CATA—thanks to you!

What CATA artists LOVE about programs YOU make possible



"CATA is always so magical. It makes me feel like I've been brought to Hollywood! I see a great future for all of us at CATA."

- Dan (ExtraSpecialTeas)



"I love to dance! If I can get up and dance, I will."

- Rosie (BCArc Nu-Opps Brain Injury program)



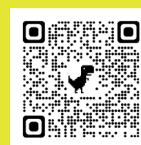
Sidney (BCArc) explores her love of dance at CATA. Your support makes CATA happen!

MATCH CHALLENGE: Your gift could be **DOUBLED!**

Give now and help unlock a \$30,000 Match Challenge for CATA artists.

This coming year is CATA's 30th anniversary—a landmark we're reaching only because people like YOU have championed our mission. In honor of our big year, a group of anonymous donors has pledged **an additional \$30,000 IF we can raise \$30,000 in new or increased gifts by December 31.**

Give now and your donation will go even further to support programs for people with disabilities! Fill out the enclosed envelope, visit CATAarts.org, or scan this QR code to make a gift.



PS: Make a gift of stock—or through your IRA or DAF!

You can make a difference by giving stock/securities, or through your IRA or Donor Advised Fund. For questions, call CATA at (413) 528-5485.

community access



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