

Beginnings and Endings...



As 2015 draws to a close, those of us at VSA Vermont are celebrating both endings and new beginnings. We've been so lucky to have our volunteer and intern Hadley Priebe with us for almost a year and a half. Hadley is graduating from Champlain Community College this month, and we couldn't be happier for her. Our volunteer storyteller, David French, has written a wonderful piece about Hadley and her work here at VSA Vermont. Enjoy!

Welcoming the beginning of 2016 has had all of us at VSA Vermont spinning wishes and dreams. You can read our magic wand wishes below. Perhaps you'll even want to share one of your own with us.

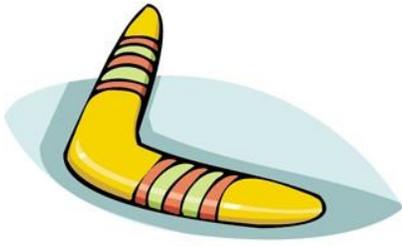
Finally, it's not too late to make a tax-deductible contribution to VSA Vermont before the year ends. You can donate online at [PayPal](#) or mail us a check at 21 Carmichael Street, Suite 206; Essex Junction, VT 05452. Help make all our wishes come true!

Hadley's Time at VSA VT

Hadley Priebe spent a great part of her final months as VSA Vermont's Communications Intern preparing for Giving Tuesday. This fell on December 1st in 2015, following the commercial blowouts of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

According to Hadley, Giving Tuesday was created "to get people past the commercial part of the season, to get them giving back to the community." In anticipation of the day, Hadley helped VSA VT harness the power that social media has to create change, sending out news about VSA VT's core beliefs and activities, along with stories of the people with whom it has worked.





The hope was that the energy that went out in this way would return to VSA VT, the way a boomerang returns to the person who threw it. To give this visual form, VSA VT provided an online image of a boomerang that people could print out and take their photo with, an “unselfie,” sending this back with thoughts or donations. Building off an idea from VSA VT board member Hilary Maslow, the intent of the boomerang was to highlight what each respondent contributed, creating a sense of community on the part of the participants.

Hadley says, “I tried to communicate VSA VT’s mission and activities to the outside community,” and boomeranging was only one way to do that. She also has managed VSA VT’s Facebook page, which provides daily updates on activities, programs being run with other partners, information about the global family of VSA organizations, calls for volunteers, and other material of current interest. A monthly feature has involved biographies of artists and entertainers with disabilities, ranging from Jay Leno to Christy Brown.

Hadley has generated daily Tweets on VSA VT’s Twitter feed as well. She hopes that VSA VT will eventually expand its presence on LinkedIn. And she has also engaged the media. One of her press releases about the BOOM VT drum festival in October 2015 caught the eye of Fox 44 television, whose morning show got VSA VT staff up at 5:00 a.m. one day to provide live coverage of preparations for the event. Fox 44 then covered the event itself.

According to Hadley, “What I’ve done for VSA VT blurs lines between public relations and marketing. It’s a little bit of both, but it’s not really either.” Whatever the correct label, she brought to this the skills she had been honing through her work on a B.A. in Communications, with a minor in marketing, at Champlain College.



Early during her college studies, Hadley attended a career day at which she spotted a woman in a BOOM t-shirt. The woman was Heidi Swevens, VSA’s Volunteer Coordinator and Adult Program Manager. Their meeting led Hadley to join VSA VT in May 2014 as a volunteer. In May 2015, she became Communications Intern, part of her academic program at Champlain College.



“VSA VT seemed to be a good fit,” says Hadley, “because of my love of the arts and my love of children and of helping people.” She grew up with a “craftsy” mother and always loved to draw. In high school, she was in the band and did a lot of theater. After her son was born, she worked at a day-care center and started an in-home center of her own for children some of whom (including her son) had disabilities. And she always wanted to serve.

“When I was younger,” Hadley says, “I wanted to save the world: let’s stop cutting down the rain forest and save the whales. If you talked to my 8-year-old self, that’s what you would have gotten. Working for VSA VT may not be thinking on the world-wide scale, but it’s making a difference in the community, which could have a greater real impact.”

December 2015 has brought major changes for Hadley. Giving Tuesday has come and

gone. She graduates from Champlain College. And her internship with VSA VT comes to an end. It's not clear what will come next. "I would love to work in an organization similar to VSA VT," she says. "I'd love to continue to help people. I don't know how that will play out in reality because not a lot of non-profits are hiring, but that is my ultimate goal at some point, to be in the non-profit world." It seems a given that she will end up in that world somewhere, still making a difference in the community.

If I Had a Magic Wand...

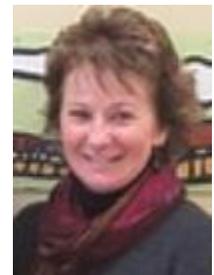


A magic wand is considered a tool of empowerment. At VSA Vermont, we believe that the ARTS are a kind of MAGIC WAND -- a tool for empowerment that creates opportunities for everyone to communicate and participate in our communities. As the 2015 year ends, we're starting the new year with "magic wand" wishes for VSA VT. Perhaps you have your own wish for us. Don't hesitate to share that wish on our Facebook page or in an email to info@vsavt.org.

Judith Chalmer, VSA VT's Executive Director, wishes: *If I had a magic wand no human spirit would starve for art, no child lack hurrahs to grow joyfully in self-expression, no teen hide giving voice to their dreams, none of us feel ashamed to reach for a note in our song, to dance, to get gooey with stuff we're making or to pretend. This is real, our human capacity to express in an exuberance of ways, and to see one another truly in the beauty we make. All we need is a chance, every one of us.*



Marguerite Adelman (left), VSA VT's Development and Communications Director; **Peggy Rainville** (right), Director of Children's Programming; and **Toby MacNutt** (bottom left), High School and Mentoring Program Coordinator; all have similar wishes. If they had magic wands, they would wish that VSA Vermont could offer more free and inclusive community arts education programs across Vermont for anyone and everyone who would like to create art: children and adults, amateurs and professionals, and people with and without disabilities. We get phone calls and emails from people with disabilities who are not receiving services from one of our partners at an agency or school where we offer free programs. All three dream of a time when we find the Leprechaun's pot at the end of the rainbow so people can access free, accessible arts education directly, wherever they live in Vermont.



Heidi Swevens, Adult Education and Volunteer Program Coordinator, says: *If I had a magic wand for 2016, all VSA volunteers would have opportunities for in-depth training, discovery, and reflection as well as playful celebration and recognition of their contributions to our mission. A second wave of the magic wand would build partnerships that enable VSA Vermont to bring inclusive arts programming to seniors throughout the state.*



Won't you make a tax-deductible, end of the year donation to VSA Vermont? Your donation is unrestricted funding which allows us to meet emerging needs across our great state.

Here's a final wish from author Neil Gaiman: *May your coming year be filled with magic and dreams and good madness. I hope you read some fine books and kiss someone who thinks you're wonderful, and don't forget to make some art -- write or draw or build or sing or live as only you can. And I hope, somewhere in the next year, you surprise yourself.*

All of us at VSA Vermont send you our Best Wishes for a very Happy New Year.



At VSA Vermont, Art Beats For All!

Help **VSA VT** keep great opportunities coming.

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