



October 8, 2014

VSA Vermont uses the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities.

BOOM VT: Keeping the beat...

Here's part two of our October e-newsletter. We've just got too many exciting things to share with you as BOOM VT gets closer and closer. We'd be amiss if we didn't tell you about our generous sponsors: the businesses and foundations that are helping to make our drum festival a reality. You'll also want a chance to bid on an exciting silent auction item. Finally, David French, our storyteller, has been out and about, interviewing our teaching-artists in the Arts Connect program. Read on.



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Our Sponsors

Making BOOM VT beat...



Vermont businesses, foundations, and organizations have helped BOOM VT become a reality. We've got 7 financial backers and 11 in-kind sponsors, all of which deserve our thanks and credit for supporting BOOM VT as well as arts education programs for children and adults with disabilities.



[Ronald McDonald House Charities](#) (RMHC) Foundation has made a BLAM with a substantial donation to our drum making and drum instruction workshops, a new addition to BOOM VT this year. We are exceedingly grateful to RMHC for helping us provide drum making and drum instruction workshops and programs to children and adults prior to and at the BOOM VT event.



Monetary donations from the following six businesses and foundations are supporting accessible services at BOOM VT as well our drum making and drum instruction workshops for children and adults:





- [Price Chopper's Golub Foundation](#)
- [Northfield Savings Bank](#)
- [Ben and Jerry's Foundation Community Action Team](#)
- [Pomerleau Real Estate](#)
- [Dunkiel Saunders Elliott Raubvogel Hand](#)
- [VSECU, a credit union for everybody in Vermont](#)

In-kind donations in support of our drum festival have come from:

- [Seven Days](#)
- [Kids VT](#)
- [Healthy Living Market and Café](#)
- [Found Line](#)
- [McKenzie Country Classics](#)
- [August First Bakery & Café](#)
- [Shelburne Orchards](#)
- [Place Creative Company](#)
- [Keurig Green Mountain](#)
- [Big Heavy World](#)
- [Advance Music Center](#)

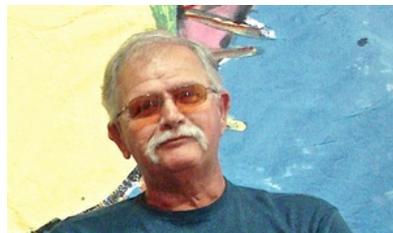
We encourage you to shop these community-minded businesses and thank them for their support.

VSA Vermont is supported in part by the [Vermont Arts Council](#) and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#). VSA Vermont is a member of the VSA Affiliate Network, a program of the [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#).

Silent Auction

An inclusive show for everyone...

Besides a live auction of an autographed Mickey Hart drum at our BOOM VT Drum Festival, we are holding a silent auction as well. You can bid via email on an hour show by **René Pellerin**. René—our BOOM VT emcee and a Vermont storyteller, comedian, presenter, trainer, and consultant who happens to be deaf-blind—is offering an hour show (date and place to be



determined). The value of this performance/show is \$300, and we'd like to start the bidding at \$100.



René is recognized by his Deaf peers as an amazing entertainer. He has dedicated his professional life to the Deaf community and has been instrumental in the passage of laws supporting the needs of members of the Deaf community and sign language interpreters throughout the state. His stories are about his personal experiences in two settings, the hearing world and the Deaf world. They give comparisons of the frustrations and subsequent comic blunders he faces in each culture. Visit René's website and learn more about him at <http://www.renetheunstoppable.com/>

Whoever bids on René's show will need to book a specialized interpreter for the performance. The cost for the interpreter could vary from \$75 to \$150, depending on your location, the interpreter's hourly rate, and his/her mileage to the event. We can help you find an interpreter. Bidding will close on October 20th at 5 PM. The winner will be announced on October 21st.

If you'd like to bid on René's program, send your bid (\$100 or more) via email to marguerite@vsavt.org. She'll keep you posted on when bids are raised so that you can determine if you want to offer more. Think how great this performance would be at your next annual meeting, special event, party, or program? This show would be a great gift to a classroom of students as well.

Arts Connect

A story from David French...



You're an artist with talent and experience, both in making art and in teaching it to others. As an arts educator, you've mostly given workshops or spent time with children outside school hours. Now, though, you'd like to learn how to work with teachers in their classrooms to help engage students of all abilities across a wide range of subject matter. Where do you turn?

Eleven Vermont artists are being taught the needed skills through Arts Connect, a multi-partner, four-month program in which VSA Vermont is the lead agency. They're gaining mastery of an alphabet soup of advanced techniques, among them UDL (Universal Design for Learning), VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies), and AIC (Arts-Integrated Curriculum).



If this sounds like the material for a graduate course, it is: participants will receive academic credit for their work from St. Michael's College in Colchester VT.



You could staff a major cultural center with the rainbow of talents the participants bring with them to Arts Connect. **Elizabeth Wilcox** and **Ellen O'Brien** work in theater. **Barbara Paulson** is a puppeteer. **Souleymane Solo Sana** and **Sue Bailey** are dancers. **Miriam Block** works in textiles. **Jen Berger** is a multi-media artist. **Rebecca Schwarz**, **Alissa Faber**, and **Leah Ellen Kucera** are all sculptors (in addition to other talents such as drawing, ceramics, and papermaking). As a bonus, there's a poet as well: **Rick Agran**.

The challenges of helping students learn are common to people coming from all these artistic directions. Charlie Rathbone, the Universal Design for Learning Consultant for the Arts Connect course, laid the theoretical groundwork for understanding how learning takes place. UDL uses the latest insights from neuroscience to illustrate how people take in information, process this and express what they've figured out, and remain engaged in the learning process.



The understanding of brain functioning highlights the extent to which people differ in the ways they learn. For Charlie, this means that the most important words in Arts Connect are "multiple options," different ways of responding to the multiple perspectives students bring to the classroom. In each teaching scenario, the first question is what kinds of learners would a particular option work for or not work for. Next is to explore ways of engaging more kinds of learners.

That's just the beginning of the complexities any teacher faces. Judy Chalmer, VSA Vermont's Executive Director, warned participants against the paradigm that sometimes places students within categories such as "visual learners" or "kinesthetic learners." In fact, every student learns visually, kinesthetically, and in many other ways to varying degrees. The teacher's objective should be to honor each student's dominant way of learning while encouraging them to explore less-used means as well.

According to the people behind UDL, the emphasis is on providing "flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies that help teachers [shape] instruction to meet varied needs." One powerful technique is Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which presents students with an image they can view together to unleash their powers of observation and imagination.

Arts Connect participants were introduced to VTS by Vera Ryersbach, lead teacher for the course. Projecting a painting on a screen, Vera led everyone through the three stages of VTS: What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?

Participants quickly realized that a painting can be a vehicle for discussing everything from architecture and geometry to body language and history. And they experienced the kinds of qualities that VTS helps develop: the ability to express one's ideas, to agree and disagree, to feed off the thoughts of others and to revise one's own, to find answers for oneself rather than be given them by a teacher.

Of course, it's not only painting that can serve as a vehicle for learning. Take dance. Rebecca had seen students at Burlington's Integrated Arts Academy dancing the three primary states of matter, and Judy notes that students have danced the scientific method there. Another participant commented, "You've never lived until you've seen a principal dancing the Gettysburg Address."

Dance can be especially powerful for people with language issues: Sue spoke of a student from Beijing with little English who was first able to mesh comfortably with her fellow students through the non-verbal rhythms of a dance class. Dance then becomes a tool for building the community of students within which learning takes place.

Or take theater. Barbara has used puppets to get people thinking about issues such as bullying or rain forest conservation. Ellen O'Brien worked with VSA's Awareness Theater to facilitate understanding between people with and without disabilities. In Barre, Elizabeth helped students in a high school self-advocacy theater group learn to express themselves with confidence.

In all these exercises, the emphasis is on engaging people in a process of learning, not just teaching at them. Charlie concluded the initial Arts Connect teaching day by saying, "My hope is that what you go away with is not necessarily the words that I've shared with you but what you've made those to be for yourself, because that's what will take you into the future – not my words but your own understanding and ability to use those." That view of learning applies equally to the artists in the course and to the students they in turn will teach.

The final step in Arts Connect is to build these understandings and techniques into an "Arts-Integrated Curriculum" (AIC). The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. says that in AIC, "Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both." Dance helps understand states of matter. Painting provides lessons in history and architecture. Theater illustrates themes of social studies. Science, history, and social studies

.....,,

inform art.

At every point, Arts Connect emphasizes community-building and collaboration. Artists learn by sharing their thoughts and experiences in the course. (On the first day, they all joined to prepare and share a common mid-day meal.) Skills are honed for getting the students they will teach to do the same. And the process of developing curriculum involves meeting with teachers, observing their classrooms, and co-planning what they might do together.

The results are reviewed within the Arts Connect group and then presented to a larger audience of school administrators and educators. Ultimately, participants may arrange residencies or other long-term relationships with particular schools. (See [Seven Days](#) for a story about a residency that emerged from the 2013 Arts Connect course.)

Central to the process is the Burlington School District's Integrated Arts Academy, which hosts classes and makes teachers available to co-plan curriculum with the artists in the course. Other groups are deeply engaged as well. The program is provided under a contract with the John. F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Among other contributions, the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts provided space for the program's kickoff day. Financial support comes from the Vermont Arts Council and the Surdna Foundation. Burlington City Arts has made space available to exhibit works by students participating in Arts Connect activities.

At the outset of this year's course, Judy welcomed the artists by saying, "I hope you're very, very proud of taking this step to deepen your skills and to become leaders among arts educators in the state in terms of your ability to engage learners of all abilities and to work collaboratively where you are so needed." The four months of Arts Connect and its aftermath will be a big step in setting that process in motion, preparing artists to go into the world as what VSA calls "[Deputies of Delight](#)."

News You Can Use

AmazonSmile: As the holidays approach, don't forget that VSA VT is registered on AmazonSmile, a program where Amazon donates .5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organizations selected by its customers. Just select VSA VT as your charity of choice. There is no cost to you and your purchases can benefit our inclusive arts education programs for all Vermonters. Just go to: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0307529>.

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