

April 1, 2016

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



## Volunteers: The Heart of VSA Vermont

VSA Vermont is able to do so much across the state because of our many wonderful volunteers. Volunteers work as program assistants, social media interns, writers, office assistants, photographers, and more. This April's issue honors our volunteers—who are at the heart of VSA Vermont.

We've got great things planned for volunteers in the coming year. We are pleased to announce that we are the recipient of one of

only 107 NobleCause grants across the United States for our volunteer program. We will be using the grant monies to develop 4 specialized workshops/trainings for our volunteers—with and without disabilities. These NobleCause grants were made possible by an anonymous donor within the GiveWell Community Foundation and organized by Noblehour.com, a volunteer management tool that promotes a culture of civic engagement and charts meaningful, measurable acts of goodness. We'll be telling you more about these workshops in the near future.



If you are a volunteer, you'll want to read about and plan to attend our special recognition program on April 25th. It's going to be loads of fun. We are also acknowledging VSA VT board member Karen Norris and our newest interns—Cameryn Wolf and Lauren Miller—with their special stories. Finally, look for your name in the list of volunteers at the end of this newsletter.

# Volunteer Recognition Night

We will be holding this year's Volunteer Appreciation Night on Monday, April 25 from 6:30-8:00 at the Elley-Long Music Center, 223 Ethan Allen Ave in Colchester. Volunteer and teaching-artist Kim Desjardins will be leading a creative art activity for all who attend.



The evening is a wonderful opportunity for mingling, light refreshments, and an arts experience. This is VSA Vermont's way to thank volunteers for their many contributions to our work. Last year, volunteers made shakers and learned how to play them under the expert guidance of Nic Cannizzaro.

We'll also be highlighting volunteers on our Facebook page again during April's National Volunteer Appreciation Month. Be sure to check Facebook throughout this month and read about what our volunteers have been up to and have to say about their volunteer experience.



## Karen Norris: Board Member and Volunteer

What do the Northfield Savings Bank (NSB) and VSA Vermont have in common? For one thing, Karen Norris, who is both the Community Banking Officer at NSB's Essex Junction branch and a member of the board of VSA Vermont.

As Norris sees it, the two organizations also share a commitment to service. "Banking is a passion for me," she says. "It's helping people make the right financial choices, recommending something better if they could be in something better." VSA is also about helping people into better places: "It's wonderful to see where people involved with VSA VT start and where they finish, how they change, see their world, improve."

From her school days, Norris had looked to enter social services in some form. While in high school in Rutland, she saw a future in geriatrics and volunteered in nursing homes. At the University of Vermont, she entered a program in social work. In her final year, she interned at Cathedral Square, a community for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Burlington.

On graduation from UVM with a Bachelor's degree in 2003, however, Norris found there were few positions open for geriatric social workers. She had been working with a bank since her junior year and stayed with banking instead. In 2007, she moved to NSB,

transferring to its Essex Junction branch in 2010.

In 2014, Norris dropped off a donation check at VSA VT, part of NSB's commitment to supporting nonprofit organizations. Her contact at VSA VT was Heidi Swevens, who had been her supervisor and mentor during the university internship at Cathedral Square. One thing led to another: Norris volunteered at VSA VT's 2014 BOOM festival, and by December of that year she was on its board of directors.



Norris is a fan of VSA VT as well as a board member: "It's an amazing nonprofit that focuses on using the arts to include individuals of all ability levels, but focusing on those with disabilities, integrating them into everyday life and education." The job of the board of directors is to help raise funds, oversee what is done with them, and spread the word about VSA VT's activities.



Norris would find it hard to choose among VSA VT's programs. With a young family of her own, she has a special fondness for Start With The Arts, VSA VT's early childhood arts education program. And she has great expectations for a new mentoring program that would link high school students with disabilities and adults with disabilities, introducing the students to the broader arts community in ways that might provide contacts and work following graduation.

Looking to VSA VT's future, Norris says, "There is great stuff happening, but the biggest challenge is to implement everywhere the work we do. If we could be in every single high school or every single Vermont community, we would." It's an aspiration that everyone who knows VSA VT's work can share.

## **Intern Volunteers: Lauren Miller and Cameryn "Cammy" Wolf**

My name is **Lauren Miller**. I was born and raised in Poughkeepsie, New York. Vermont has always held a special place in my heart, as I grew up spending summers in Vergennes at the Basin Harbor Club.

I entered UVM, hoping to decide on a career in clinical psychology, counseling, or social work. I have always felt a deep empathetic connection to others, and have wanted to work with people who have drug addictions for most of my young life. I have also always felt a strong connection to art. One of my first memories is going to art museums with my Grandmother.

At the end of my freshman year, I decided to major in social work and minor in art history in hopes of becoming an art therapist. I feel passionately about the interconnection of art and social work, as I have seen the way art has helped many of my friends. Art has offered an outlet of energy and expression for many of the people I know who are struggling with addiction, depression, or the loss of a loved one. I have also witnessed the way art amplifies feelings of happiness and excitement, as well as brings communities together.



With this in mind, my advisor recommended that I check out the VSA VT website for internship opportunities. I had never heard of the VSA VT before and was pleasantly surprised at what I found. The program assistant position caught my eye because it involved building programs for people with disabilities to gain accessibility to the arts. I also found VSA VT's mission statement—"VSA VT uses the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities"—relates to how I feel about art. I got in contact with Heidi Swevens and received the internship with much excitement and joy.

On days that I am not in the office, I assist two teaching-artists in a dance and movement class. I love being a part of the classes because I am able to build relationships with both the students and the teachers. Best of all, I get to see other people smiling and laughing while expressing themselves. Being a part of these classes has not only taught me a lot about myself, but also about people with disabilities. I have begun to incorporate "people first language" into my everyday vocabulary, learned how to engage people with disabilities respectfully and effectively, and have had fun. At the same time, I've learned some cool new dance moves, such as the grape vine and sparkle hands.

As I finish my time with VSA VT, I cannot believe how sad I am that it is almost over. I have learned many invaluable lessons about art, joy, hard work, and compassion that I will take away with me as I finish my social work education and enter the career world.



My name is **Cameryn (Cammy) Wolf** and I am the communications intern at VSA Vermont. I am a senior at the University of Vermont and I am majoring in Public Communications. I have called Vermont home since I was 15. Spending my college years in Burlington has been a great experience and I am sad to see it coming to an end. My college experience has been a bit unorthodox. When I graduated high school, I took a gap year and moved to London, England. During my time abroad I was a full-time volunteer. I worked with four women with disabilities to help make their lives as independent as possible. Going abroad changed my life. It helped me to realize that I want to work

with people to positively impact their lives. After my gap year, I attended the Community College of Vermont where I received an associate's degree in Liberal Arts. When I completed my time at CCV, I transferred to UVM to finish my education.

I was very fortunate to find VSA VT. This past autumn I took a class that required us to volunteer with a local organization. I had never heard of VSA VT before but they seemed to do great things in the community. I took part in their annual letter appeal and it was during that time that I found out they were seeking interns. I applied for the internship on a whim and didn't think I would get, but by the end of the semester I found out that I had.

Interning for VSA VT has been a wonderful experience! It is exciting to be involved in an organization that is working to improve the lives of people in our community. I have various responsibilities at VSA VT, but one of my favorites is creating the weekly social media posts. I love researching and posting on social media about topics that I think our audience will enjoy. It's a great feeling when I see people liking and interacting with our posts.



It is going to be a sad day when I have to say goodbye to VSA VT. I have loved my time interning here and I am looking forward to applying what I have learned to present and future work experiences.

## Recognizing All Our Volunteers

Can you find your name below? Want to? Contact Heidi Swevens, VSA Vermont's Volunteer Coordinator, at [heidi@vsavt.org](mailto:heidi@vsavt.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities. If we forgot your name or spelled it wrong, our apologies. Please let us know!

Abby Cohen  
Adam Hurwitz  
A.J. Priebe-Carter  
Alan Shannon  
Alex Romac  
Amanda Ellis  
Amanda Swevens  
Andy Perkins  
Anna St. Lawrence  
Armin Milak  
Ashley McCullough  
August Siebs  
Barb Heath  
Bhumika Patel  
Brad Dousevicz  
Bridget Edwards  
Bruce McKenzie  
Cade Nesbitt  
Cammy Wolf  
Carly Gill  
Cassandra Scanlon  
Caylin Legare  
Celia Asbell  
Corrine Mertz  
Cristin Manner  
Damien Garcia  
David French  
David Segal  
David Waller  
Dawn Hartman  
Debbie Krug  
Dov Schiller  
Dustin Atkins  
Ellen Gill  
Ellie Miner  
Emily Johnson  
Emma Feldman  
Emma O'Rourke  
Eva Pratt  
Faith Mancuso  
Franscesca Huey  
Geoff Hand  
Greta Hajdukova  
Hadley Priebe  
Hannah Mumson  
Hannh Goetz  
Hayden Chichester  
Hilary Maslow  
Inger Dybfest  
Isabella Savices  
Jacob Mitchell



James Carlson  
Jean Haverstick  
Jeff Salisbury  
Jennifer Stein  
Jesse Rosenfield  
Jessica Hill  
Josh Kelly  
Karen Nissan  
Karen Norris  
Kathleen Ruth Shiman  
Kay Parker  
Kiersten Kouwenhoven  
Kim Desjardins  
Lauren Miller  
Leah Conдеми  
Lily Fedorks  
Lindsay Vannersdall  
Madelyn Wang  
Mariel Larmand  
Marjorie Burns  
Mark Bowen  
Meredith Lupini  
Nic Cannizzaro  
Nicole Kelley  
Nicole Villemaire  
Olivia Smith Hammond  
Patty Gibbons  
Penny Barber  
Peter Kriff  
Rachel Ogden  
Reed Whirtmont  
René Pellerin  
Rob Miller-Shulman  
Ruth Gminski  
Sarah Kulig  
Sarah Weiss  
Sasha Ross Becker  
Shelby Dickinson  
Sheila Fazackerley  
Shira Habermehl  
Stacy Bressette  
Stuart Paton  
Taylor Malik  
Taylor Rosenblum



*At VSA Vermont, Art Beats For All!*

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

Donate online at [PayPal!](#)



*VSA Vermont is a member of the VSA Affiliate Network,  
a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.*

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