



Promoting creative power in people with disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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artsJAM Detroit! WAY Selected to Participate in Nationwide Project

DETROIT, MI: September 18, 2009 — Participants from the 2009 *VSA arts of Michigan (VSAMI) artsJAM Detroit! WAY* program have been named honorees by the National Day of Encouragement, 7 Days Across America project. Founded by the Encouragement Foundation of Searcy, Alabama, this project seeks to highlight individuals and programs supporting causes and people in need by volunteering time and talents, founding non-profits, educating, advocating, and more to change the world for good. The National Day of Encouragement celebration took place in New York City on September 12, 2009.

Discovering a Detroit Free Press article written by Jeff Seidel in July 2009, the Encouragement Foundation was eager to nominate the *artsJAM* program as one of its honorees. Under the direction of VSAMI staff and volunteers, twenty area teens and adults, ranging in age from 15-20 were selected to participate in the 2009 *artsJAM Detroit! WAY (Work Alternatives for Youth)* program. This program aids young adults in the development of social and professional skills through participation and completion of creative projects. This year's participants learned rudimentary skills necessary for film production including story conception, scriptwriting, music composition, acting, directing, choreography, filming, and studio editing. The film strove to document the dreams and aspirations of youth in the Detroit community. *artsJAM Detroit! WAY* is supported in part by Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and City of Detroit Neighborhood Opportunity Fund.

About the Project

Participation in this year's National Day of Encouragement was widespread. From San Francisco to New York City and points between, Americans are getting involved. Individuals are supporting causes and people in need by volunteering their time and talents, founding their own non-profits, educating, advocating and more, to change the world for good. To spark the 2009

MORE

Vision of an inclusive community • Strength in shared resources • Artistic expression that unites us all

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Day of Encouragement, the Encouragement Foundation traveled to 14 cities in 7 days, culminating in an event in New York City on September 12, to honor the amazing and life changing actions of teens and pre-teens across America. Youth-led projects honored by the movement from September 5 to 12 included work in CA, NV, AZ, CO, OK, TX, IL, MI, TN, GA, AR, PN, MA and NY.

The Encouragement Foundation's Project *National Day of Encouragement, 7 Days Across America* was endorsed by U.S. Senate Resolution 261, backed by Southwest Airlines, Commonsensesuccess.net, CNL Lifestyle Properties, and Harding University with support from celebrities such as comedian and actor, Jeff Foxworthy, and embraced by communities around the nation, this truly unique idea is gaining considerable momentum. *“The date of September 12 was selected because it is a day for new beginnings following 9/11,”* said Andrew Baker, organizer of the National Day of Encouragement and executive director of the Encouragement Foundation, a group that raises awareness about the benefits of encouraging others. *“Our goal is to challenge people not to just think about the idea of encouragement, but to do something that will encourage someone else...even if it’s simply speaking a kind word.”*

For more information on the National Day of Encouragement or to get involved in the movement, visit www.letsencourage.com.

About VSA arts of Michigan (VSAMI)

VSAMI is a member of the international network of VSA arts, an affiliate of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. VSA arts was founded in 1974 by Jean Kennedy Smith, and has been designated by the U.S. congress as the nation’s coordinating agency for arts programs for people with disabilities. VSA has 52 affiliates in the U.S. and over 55 international affiliates, and annually serves millions of people worldwide.

VSA arts of Michigan supports its programs and services across the state through grants from national VSA arts under an award from the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education; the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs; and through contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals.

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