



Promoting creative power in people with disabilities

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VSA arts of Michigan assist individuals in gaining access to the arts

Detroit, MICH, Dec. 4, 2008— For many people with disabilities the arts can be inaccessible, but VSA arts of Michigan help people with disabilities breakdown barriers to the arts.

VSA arts of Michigan provides access and opportunities for children and adults with disabilities to experience and grow through the arts. VSAMI offers art programs for students, they provide technical assistance for artists who want to work on a professional level; and they educate individuals and organizations on how to make activities, buildings and structures more accessible.

VSAMI has two school arts programs including: *artsJAM* and an *Artist-in-Residence* program. The *artsJAM* family of programs provide after school access to the arts. Students participate in and create music, visual arts, dance and literary arts 4 days a week after school. VSA arts of Michigan has three *artsJAM* programs: **artsJAM Detroit**, **artsJAM Osborn** and **artsJAM Flint**.

The *Artist-in-Residence* program is an arts program designed to integrate the arts into both general and special education classroom curricula by providing professional development for teachers and hands-on learning through the arts for students. The program is conducted by trained, professional, teaching artists.

VSA arts of Michigan provides services to artists with disabilities who are working at a professional level in their chosen art discipline to achieve their career goals. VSA arts of Michigan maintains a registry of professional Michigan artists with disabilities and provides resources and technical assistance with resumes, artists' statements, slides, audio tapes and video tapes of the artists' work. VSAMI also provides a series of career forums that discuss topics like marketing and selling art, copyright and networking with gallery owners. VSAMI has a *Career Forum* discussing Copyright taking place February 12, 2008 in Lansing, MI, at the Michigan Library and Historical Center.

VSA arts of Michigan also provides technical assistance and identifies resources that will make Michigan arts and cultural organizations become more accessible to patrons with disabilities. Key services include Awareness training, On-site surveys, advice on appropriate accommodations, a review of the organization's communications tools, assistance in developing plans to improve accessibility, and a Cultural Access Kit containing information and resources in order to further the process.

VSAMI offers professional development training to educators, parents, artists, human services and health care workers to encourage them to integrate the arts into their school curriculum and daily activities.

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Art was the first of all languages. It remains today our best and most universal vehicle for expressing the depths of feeling, sublime sensibilities, and unique perception through which the human spirit is made manifest. For many people faced with special needs, the arts may be the only way to define themselves in our world.

VSAMI is an award winning organization dedicated to helping children and adults with disabilities gain access to the arts and culture. Participants receive accessibility to the arts via a wide range of programs and services offered by VSA arts of Michigan. These programs also offer a step towards self-sufficiency by showing artists how to use their talents as a means of support.

VSA arts of Michigan (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 as 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.

If you need any further information please contact Lorraine Chavis at the office 313-832-3303, or email Lorraine@vsami.org.

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

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