

# OPENING DOORS TO ACCESSIBILITY: BEST PRACTICES IN CREATING INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

NEW JERSEY THEATRE ALLIANCE  
CULTURAL ACCESS NETWORK  
GROUNDS FOR SCULPTURE  
ARTS ACCESS PROGRAM AT MATHENY MEDICAL AND  
EDUCATIONAL CENTER





# PRESENTERS

- **Robert Carr**, Director of Programs and Services/ADA Coordinator at the NJ Theatre Alliance
- **John McEwen**, Executive Director of New Jersey Theatre Alliance and Cultural Access Network
- **Bonnie Brown**, Director of Operations at Grounds For Sculpture
- **Cassandra Demski**, Curator of Education at Grounds For Sculpture
- **Keith Garletts**, Outreach Coordinator and Program Specialist, Arts Access Program at Matheny Medical and Educational Center





# Cultural Access Network Project

A CO-SPONSORED PROJECT OF THE  
NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS AND THE NEW  
JERSEY THEATRE ALLIANCE



New Jersey  
**Theatre Alliance**  
Supporting Theatre • Engaging Audiences



# HISTORY

- **In 1990**, John McEwen approached Council Chair, Elizabeth Christopherson
- The Cultural Access Network Project (CAN) , formerly the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force, was **created in 1992** to assist all cultural arts organizations in making their programs and facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- **In 1993**, a statewide conference, ***IT TAKES MORE THAN A RAMP***, launched CAN and was attended by more than 300 people from across the state.



# THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF CAN

- Susan P. Coen  
Consultant
  - Janet Zoubeck Dickson  
McCarter Theatre Center
  - Pamela Gaston  
New Jersey Commission for the  
Blind & Visually Impaired
  - Maureen Heffernan  
Young Audiences of NJ
  - Wendy Liscow  
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
  - Michael T. Mooney  
Disability Advocate
  - Arlene Romoff  
Hearing Loss Association of NJ
  - Michael Schnoering, AIA  
Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC
  - Thomas E. Shaw  
Mercer County Office for the Disabled
  - Jim Thebery  
Bergen County Department of Human Services  
Division on Disability Services
  - Jason Weiland  
NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - Ina White  
Kean University
  - Vanessa Young  
VSA Arts New Jersey
  - John McEwen  
New Jersey Theatre Alliance
  - Robert Carr  
New Jersey Theatre Alliance
- Members Ex Officio
- Nicholas Paleologos  
New Jersey State Council on the Arts
  - Don Ehman  
New Jersey State Council on the Arts
  - Marilyn Dore  
New Jersey State Council on the Arts



# SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEYS

- The Cultural Access Network used the Ohio Arts Council's Self Assessment Survey as a foundation for the formation of an assessment tool
- The survey is divided into sections, has guidelines for each question and an appendix consisting of a wide range of resources
- Organizations are encouraged to complete an ADA Self Assessment Survey prior to completing and submitting an ADA Plan



# ITEMS THAT ARE READILY ACHIEVABLE YOU CAN DO THIS NOW!

- Board Approved Policy Statement
- Sensitivity Training for Staff and Volunteers
- Assigning an ADA Coordinator
- Establish or share an ADA Advisory Committee
- Non-Discrimination Policy
- Job Descriptions for Staff and Volunteers
- Grievance Procedure

*“You are all your organization’s greatest accessibility asset.”—  
Betty Siegel, Director of VSA and Accessibility at The John F.  
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*



# OBSERVATIONS FROM ADA PLANS

- Areas of Growth
  - Policies & Advisory Boards
  - Program Development/Use of Access Symbols
  - Facility Improvements/Plans
  - Better Understanding of Developing Rider or Letter of Agreement with Outside Venues
- Areas that Continue to Be Challenging
  - Budgeting
  - Full integration among departments
  - Long term program planning
  - Target Marketing/Technology



# FOCUS GROUPS/SURVEYS – FINDINGS

In 2005 a series of focus groups and surveys were conducted to evaluate the arts and cultural event participation among people with disabilities in New Jersey, as part of NJSCA's Building Cultural Participation initiative in partnership with The Wallace Foundation.

## Key Findings

- Inaccurate information on website or over the phone
- Apprehension about attending venues for first time
- Accessible information buried in marketing materials and websites
- Staff not fully trained in, or aware of, access programs/features
- Need for a concierge/one stop shopping
- Transportation Challenges



# SIGN-INTERPRETATION & OPEN CAPTIONING



Sign Interpretation



Open Captioning

- Mini Grant Initiatives
- Listening Enhancement Equipment Loan
- Theatrical Interpreting Training



# AUDIO DESCRIPTION



AD Training



Live Description

- Mini Grant Initiatives
- Listening Enhancement Equipment Loan
- Training



Sensory Seminars

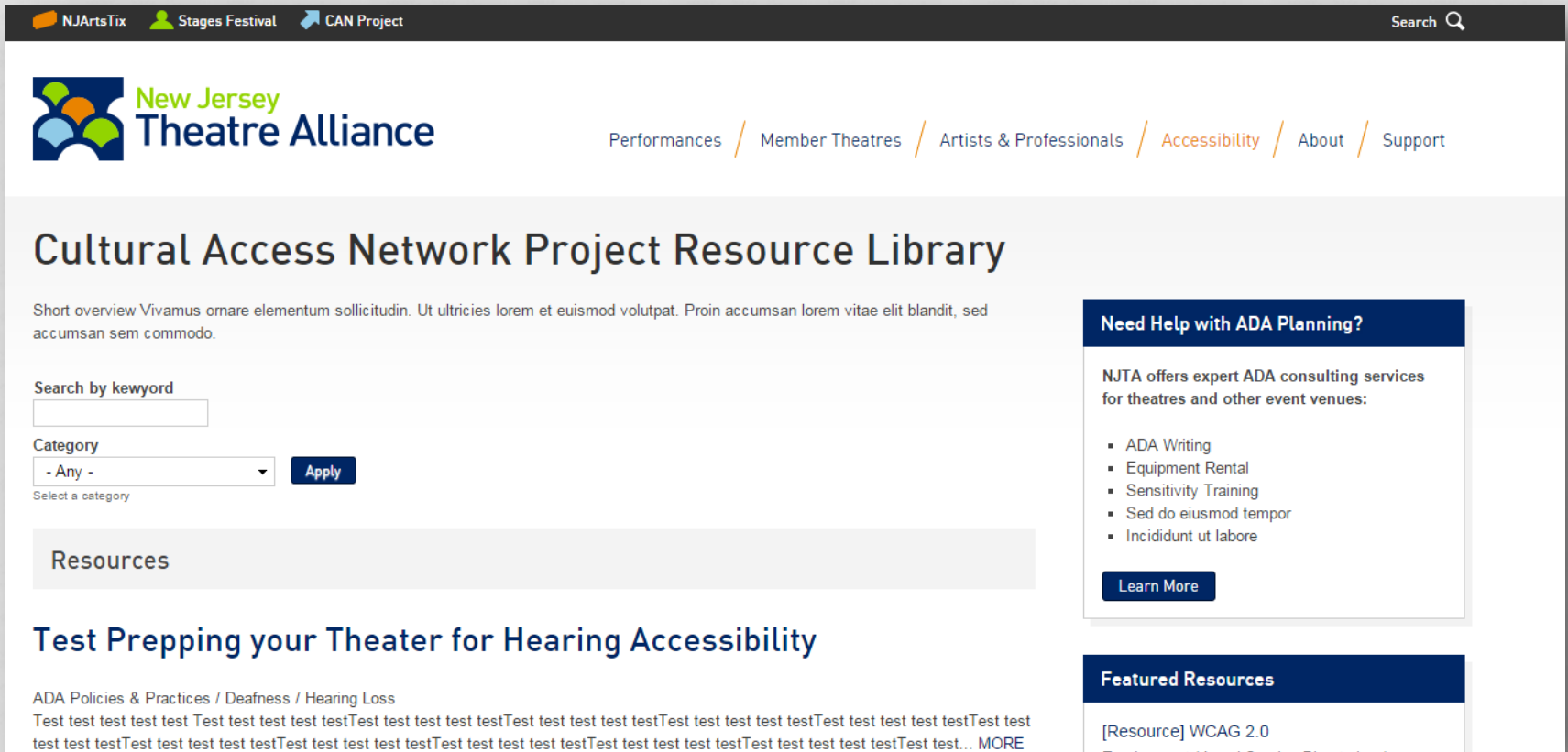


# MARKETING/OUTREACH

- Access Symbols
- Email Blasts
- Sample Press Releases
- Articles in Newsletters (i.e. Able News; Monthly Communicator)
- Offices on Aging
- County Offices Serving People with Disabilities
- NJ Commission for Blind, NJ Division of the Deaf



ONLINE RESOURCE LIBRARY---  
 NJTHEATREALLAINCE.ORG/ACCESSIBILITY





# CULTURAL ACCESS NETWORK AWARDS

- Education
- Networking
- Inspiration
- Artist Showcase
- Recognition of Role Model Individuals & Organizations

## Highlights from Past Cultural Access Awards



*Attendees at the 2012 Cultural Access Awards*

*Pianist Matthew Whitaker playing at the 2012 Cultural Access Awards*



*Harpist Katherine Highet performs a piece at the 2011 Cultural Access Awards*



*Vocalist Ali Stroker sings at the 2010 Cultural Access Awards*



# OTHER SERVICES OF THE CULTURAL ACCESS NETWORK PROJECT



Sensitivity Training



Artist resources



Technical Assistance



# SPONSORS/PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the support of The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Alliance receives support from the following sponsors/partners:

- Alliance for Arts and Health New Jersey
- Johnson & Johnson
- Kessler Foundation
- NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- NJ Commission for the Blind
- Springpoint Senior Living Foundation
- Wallerstein Foundation for Geriatric Life Improvement



# LOOKING AHEAD

- Sensory Friendly Performances
- Another Round of Focus Groups
- Standard Language throughout the community in marketing and promoting access services
- Google Virtual Tours



# GROUNDINGS FOR SCULPTURE







Grounds For Sculpture, Inc. (GFS) is fully committed to ensuring that accessibility guidelines and requirements as set forth by the federal government and state of New Jersey are implemented in as timely and efficient a manner as possible.

GFS has been consistently responsive to making the arts accessible for all people with disabilities and will continue to strive to provide the utmost accessible experience possible. Through GFS programming, design, and service, we continue to reach out to and provide assistance and appropriate accommodation.

GFS trains its staff and volunteers in order to encourage superior and effective communication and the practice of effective and sensitive techniques to serve members of the community with disabilities. GFS is also committed to exercising best practice and outreach in regards to employing persons with disabilities, both in artistic and administrative/operational areas.

GFS regularly reviews its policies and procedures to adapt, accommodate and address any issues or problems that might arise in regard to ADA compliance and will regularly assess its progress in achieving full compliance.

The Board of Trustees  
Grounds For Sculpture

## GROUND'S FOR SCULPTURE ACCESSIBILITY



Grounds For Sculpture has had a long standing commitment to making the arts accessible for all people with disabilities. Programming reaches out to those with visual disabilities through the Touch Tour program, (designed with the assistance of the NJ Commission for the Blind) which provides trained docents to give outdoor garden tours of specific sculpture that are designed to be touched and appreciated through their textures and shapes. Also provided are hands-on workshops. Through an association with the Talking Book and Braille Center, Grounds For Sculpture provides a traveling educational workshop which offers the opportunity to touch sculpture and learn about the process of sculpture making through artists and trained educators.

### ADA SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **Large print editions of the following:** (available upon request in the Visitor Center)
  - History of Grounds For Sculpture
  - Membership Information
  - Park Etiquette
  - How to Schedule a Group Visit
  - General Information
  - Current Exhibition Information
- **Traveling educational presentation** that offers the opportunity to touch sculptural elements and learn about the process of sculpture-making.
- **Touch Tours for the visually impaired** (scheduled through the Tour Coordinator) by calling 609-586-0616 ext. 200
- **An introductory video** (closed captioning provided)
- **Assisted listening devices** (available to patrons for docent-led tours and lectures)

- **Interpreters** (available with at least two weeks notice, includes tours and lectures)
- Buildings have **automatic door entrances** for easy access
- A wheelchair accessible video screening room.
- A Museum Building exhibition space, accessible on the first floor (a digital photo frame of the second floor installation is available for viewing on the first floor)
- A fully accessible Domestic Arts Building (exhibition space, café and museum shop)
- An **ADA rated vehicle** that can accommodate a wheelchair and offers tours throughout the park for those with limited mobility.
- The **assistance cart** is available Tuesdays – Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on a first come-first serve basis or you may call in advance to schedule a tour.
- A map indicating the most easily accessible pathways is attached to this brochure.
- The Seward Johnson Center for the Arts is constructed on one level allowing easy access for everyone. There are two **private restrooms** available to visitor's who may need an aide's assistance.
- As an outdoor venue, some pathways throughout the park may offer challenges to those with wheelchairs/scooters. New pathways of crushed sand and composite are being constructed as funding allows. (See map for specifics)
- Our **Wellness Walks/Wellness Talks program** targets the mature adult population and encourages learning about healthy lifestyles while enjoying the benefits of exercise in the park. (Available for all levels of mobility)
- All of our **staff and volunteers receive ADA training** on an on-going basis.

Grounds For Sculpture is dedicated to continuing to identify problems of accessibility and finding solutions and accommodations to ensure that everyone can experience all aspects of our programming. For additional information: 609-586-0616 ext. 223 | To schedule cart rides: 609-586-0616 ext. 224 Funding for this guide was made possible by the Karma Foundation.



# GROUNDS FOR SCULPTURE ACCESSIBILITY





# ACCESSIBILITY CARTS





# MOBILITY DEVICES FOR RENTAL







**To be a truly accessible organization,  
access needs to be considered by all  
departments.**



# ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMS



GFS creates programing that can be adapted for special needs.



# PARTNERSHIPS



exhibition of work created  
in the Enabling Creativity  
program



work from Education  
Gallery exhibition of  
participants from the  
Center for Creative  
Works





**Successful access programs are designed with the interests and needs of special populations in mind.**



# WHAT DO VISITORS WANT FROM A MUSEUM EXPERIENCE?

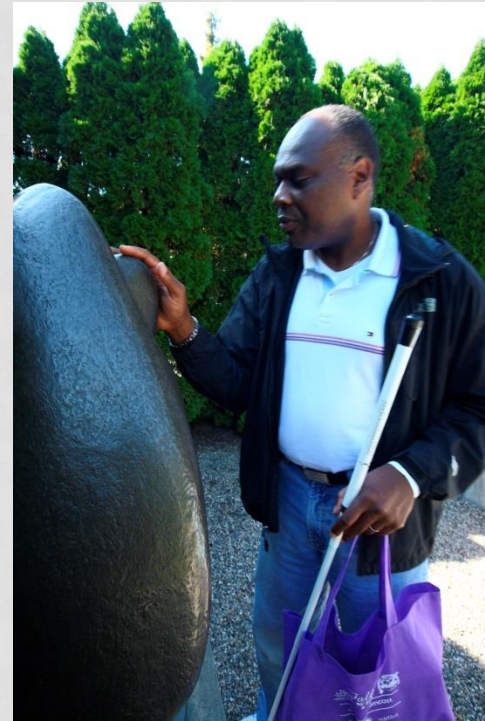


- The only way to find out is to ASK!
- Hold a focus group! You will learn from your visitors and engage them in program development.



# TOUCH TOURS

- Assistance in developing our first touch tour from the Talking Book and Braille Center
- Considered distance between each piece, scale, texture etc.





# HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS





# BEST PRACTICES FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN A FACILITATED ARTS PROGRAM





# ARTS ACCESS

## Multi-disciplinary Fine Arts Program

- Visual Arts
- Performing Arts
- Literary Arts







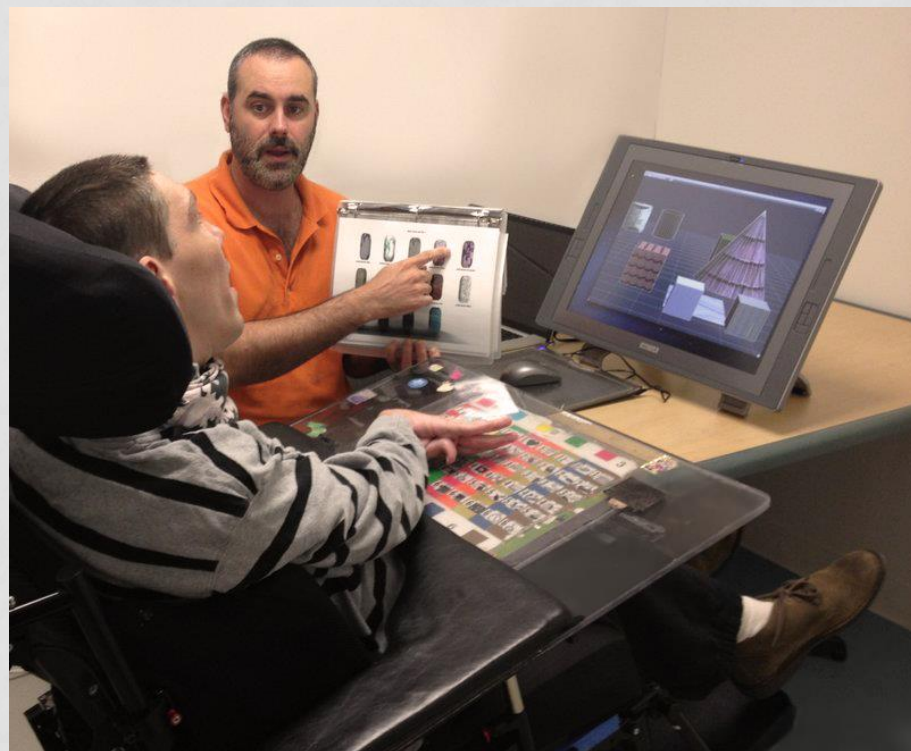




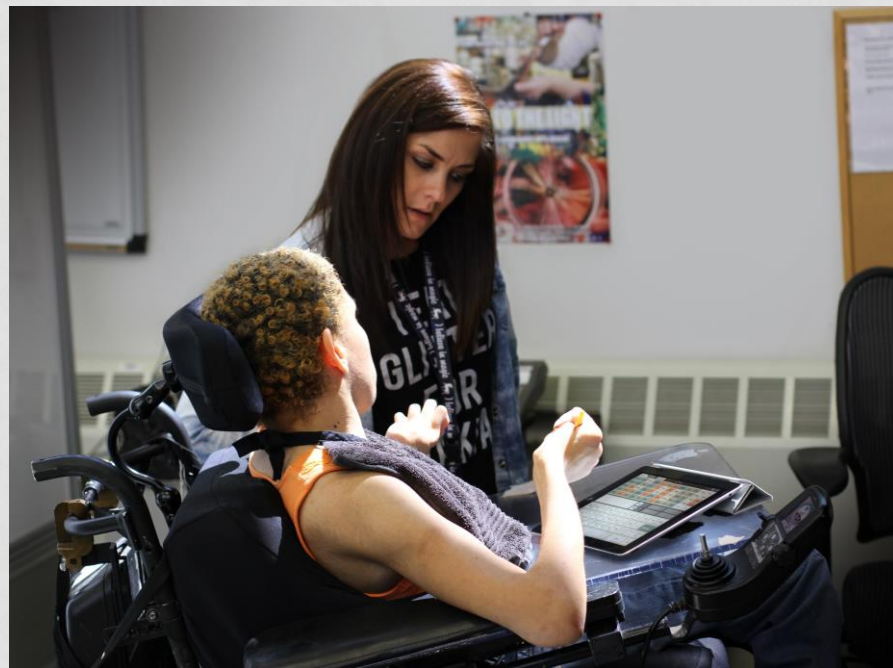
# RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

(non-negotiable principles  
for artistic intermediaries)

- Freedom of Choice
- Neutrality
- Artists Assisting Artists
- No Preconceptions









# STEWARDS OF THE ART

(owning responsibility for the entire life cycle of the work)

- Exhibition
- Performance
- Marketing
- Sales



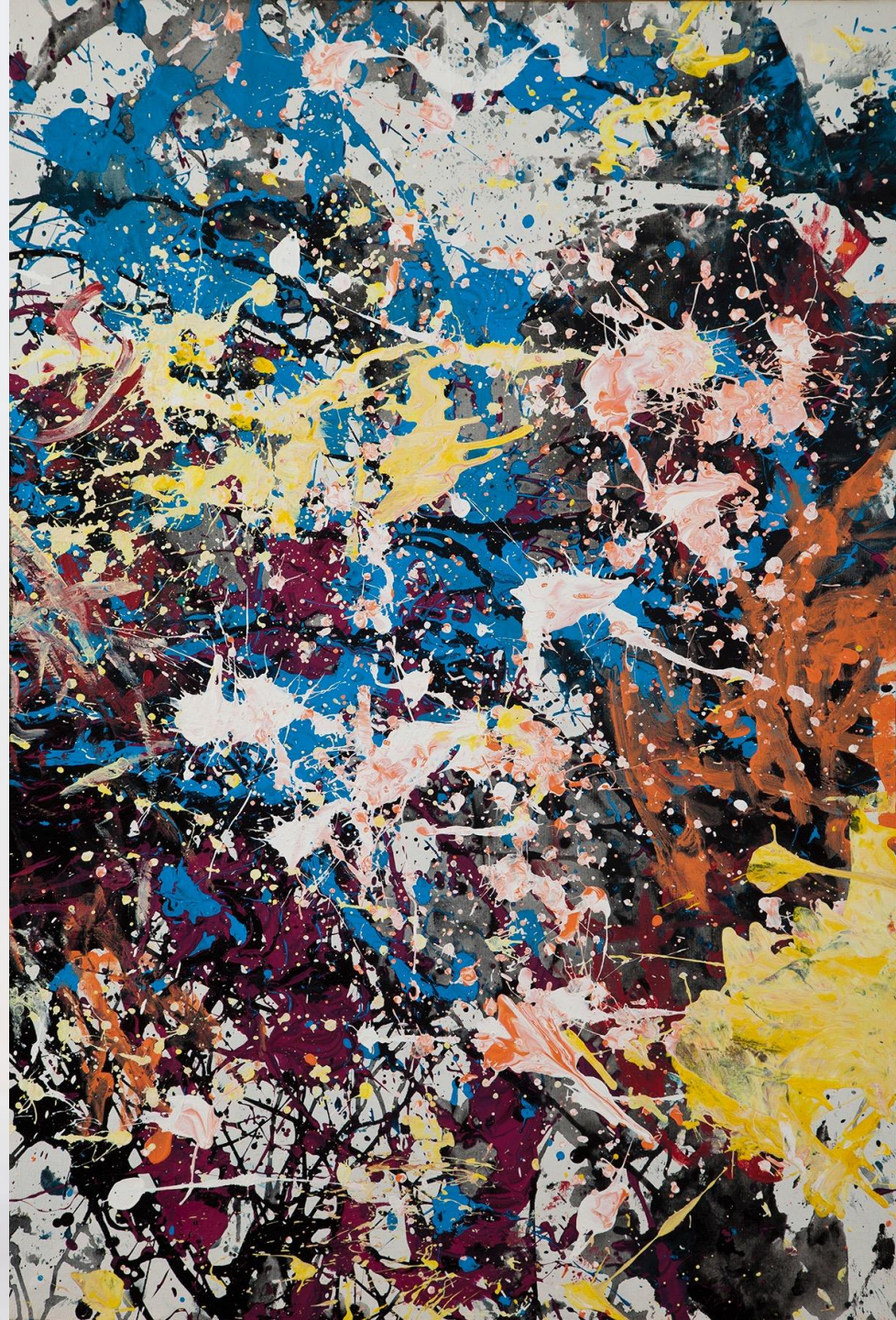


# FULL CIRCLE 2015: PERSPECTIVES

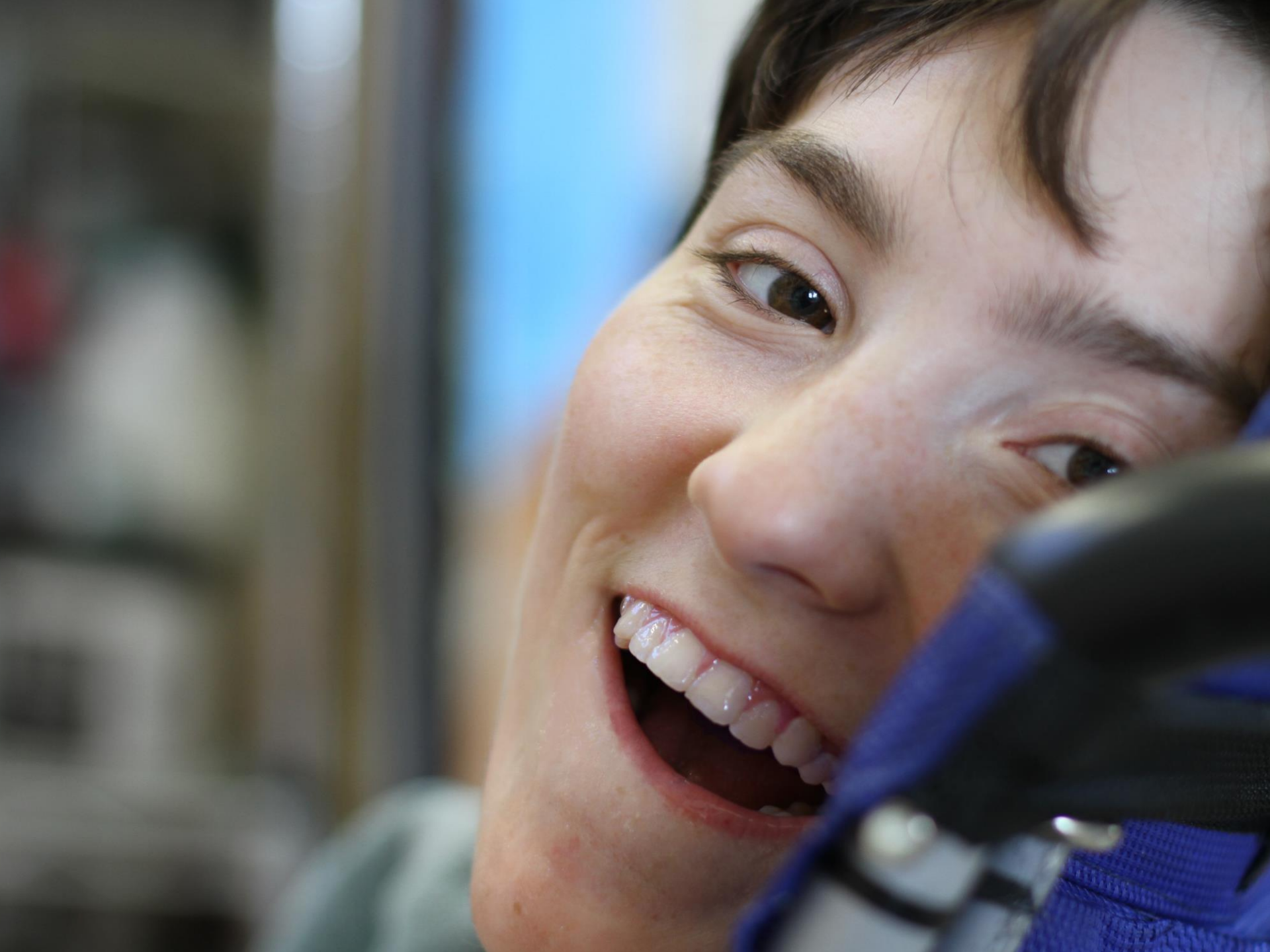
**Saturday November 7, 3-6pm**

- Collaborative Exhibit at Rutgers/UMDNJ with ARC Mercer, WAE Center & Hattie Larlham (2013, 2014, 2015)
- Exhibition at Morris Museum
- Exhibition at Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission
- NJ Abilities Film Festival
- Exhibit at Outsider Art Inside the Beltway
- Stages Festival 2015 with New Jersey Theatre Alliance - partnered with Premiere Stages
- Exhibit at Moss Laboratory











“I want to dance to show people what I can do, so people don’t see my disability or my wheelchair – so they can see ***me.***”

–Jessica E. Arts Access Participant



“When I look at my painting I need to decide if it needs my help or if it doesn’t need my help and it is done”

–Eric C. Arts Access Participant



# CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Robert Carr:** [rcarr@njtheatrealliance.org](mailto:rcarr@njtheatrealliance.org)
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