



The *Arts Ambassador Program* is designed to bring professional artists with disabilities into classrooms to engage people of all ages and abilities in a presentation that discusses the Ambassador's art form, disability and work as a professional artist.

Through this program, students and staff are able to gain experience, knowledge and understanding about:

- **various art forms including visual arts, music, theater and dance/movement**
- **the disability culture**
- **the importance of and need for inclusion of people with disabilities in the arts**
- **the similarities that connect the human spirit of us all**

VSA arts of Minnesota

Arts Ambassador Program

Arts Ambassadors presentations will offer new options to students who have had limited exposure to particular art forms. Participants will be reminded of the capabilities of people with disabilities.

Each presentation will include the Artist Ambassador speaking about or demonstrating their particular art form with time allowed for student questions. A representative from VSA arts of Minnesota will share information about artists with disabilities and will draw on materials available through organizational resources. The length of each presentation will be generally between 45- 60 minutes. VSA arts of Minnesota's arts in education coordinator will work with a designated teacher/administrator to determine what (if any) presentation accommodations will need to be made based on age, disability and/or classroom setting. **Schools will be charged a fee to offset a portion of the project expenses, \$125.00 for metro area schools, \$150.00 for greater Minnesota.**

Each student attending the presentation will complete a brief post-survey to assess their awareness of disability in general, of the activity of people with disabilities in the arts and of their feelings about people with disabilities. In addition to the student surveys, teachers will be asked to complete a questionnaire following the presentation. Some of the questions will be similar to those asked of the students but others will address issues of curricular relevance, age and ability appropriateness and suggestions for improvements.

Teachers/school administrators can make arrangements for school visits by completing the [Arts Ambassador Request](#) found under Forms & Guidelines, Arts in Education Forms on our website (www.vsaartsmn.org/forms.html) and sending it to:



Jenea Rewertz-Targui, Arts in Education Coordinator
VSA arts of Minnesota
528 Hennepin Ave Suite 305
Minneapolis, MN 55403
E-mail: jenea@vsaartsmn.org

The Ambassadors:

Alissa Hullett

Multi-Media Visual Art

Disability: *Mental Illness*

Artist Statement:

“I want to speak of what I’ve experienced; to give permission to share our thoughts and emotions. In art there is no judgment, there is no single path.”



What unique experiences and insights can Alissa offer classroom participants?

Art exploration:

Alissa will guide participants through a slide show of her work to critique and discuss the visual arts and principles of design.

Participants will have the opportunity to apply new knowledge through creating a personal piece of art that applies various principles of design and printmaking techniques.

Disability education & awareness:

VSA arts of Minnesota and Alissa Hullett will educate participants about mental illnesses and issues that surround this disability.

Alissa will discuss her experiences and share skills that can help people become more aware of their emotions, provide options for self expression and ideas on how to channel emotions into positive outlets as well as techniques on how to build a positive network of support for oneself.

Carei Thomas

Pianist/Composer/Educator

Disability: *Guillain-Barre' Syndrome*

Artist Statement:

"People can be victorious just as you are."



What unique experiences and insights can Carei offer classroom participants?

Art exploration:

Carei will work with students to explore and discuss his musical art form and composition designs that can be transcribed to standard music notations.

Students will then compose mini pieces using their names experimenting with an ABA structure of composition.

Disability education & awareness:

VSA arts of Minnesota and Carei Thomas will educate participants about Guillain-Barre' Syndrome and issues that surround this disability.

Carei will also discuss the importance of interdependency and the philosophy that our minds and body's are inseparable, as is the human race and environment.

Bob Saxon

Sculptor

Disability: *Multiple Sclerosis*

Artist Statement:

“I look forward to sharing my artistic knowledge and experiences with the students, but more importantly I look forward to what I will learn from the uninhibited minds of the young people I hope to work with across the state.”



What unique experiences and insights can Bob offer classroom participants?

Art exploration:

Bob will guide participants through a slide show of his work to explore the rhythm of nature through connections between science, math and the arts. Participants will gain new insights on how an artist can be inspired by their surroundings and how that inspiration can then be expressed through the visual arts.

Participating students will also have the opportunity to explore sculpture and three dimensional art by creating individual sculptures based on Bob's scientific approach to the arts.

Disability education & awareness:

VSA arts of Minnesota and Bob Saxton will educate participants about Multiple Sclerosis and issues that surround this disability.

Bridget Riversmith

Visual Art & Animation

Disability: *Invisible disability*



Artist Statement:

“It seems that the world is a mysterious, multi-layered puzzle of dreams and everyone in it holds the pieces, the clues to the big picture. I’ve noticed that creating things is a way to bring the clues to the surface. The pieces of the puzzle are lenses that help us both focus and project our vision.”

What unique experiences and insights can Bridget offer classroom participants?

Art exploration:

Bridget will guide participants through a slide show of her work and discuss the importance of using all of your senses and making mistakes in creating artwork.

Participants will have the opportunity to create an illustrated decoder booklet for collecting their own clues and pieces of the big picture. Bridget will discuss how to use this booklet to decode and deal with the puzzles of daily life.

Disability education & awareness:

VSA arts of Minnesota and Bridget Riversmith will educate participants about what invisible disabilities are, and the issues that surround them.

Bridget will discuss her experience living with a disability, and how she’s learned to cope using her imagination as a lens to focus on ways through and around the barriers that define it.

Alec Sweazy

Musician Piano/Accordion



Disability: *William's Syndrome*

Artist Statement:

"I believe it is our responsibility to find our hidden potential and pursue those talents with passion, practice and perseverance. Everyone has abilities, some of which may be hidden and need discovery. "

What unique experiences and insights can Alec offer classroom participants?

Art exploration:

Alec will engage participants in gaining knowledge and exposure to music either through his accordion or a piano. Participants will learn about the instruments, how they work, and develop skills in identifying different genres of music played.

Participants will also have the opportunity to explore playing the instrument(s) for their friends, classmates and teachers.

Disability education & awareness:

VSA arts of Minnesota will educate participants about William's Syndrome and issues that surround this disability.

Because of this unique disability and the range of abilities and disabilities that lie within this diagnosis, VSA arts of Minnesota along with Alec Sweazy discuss how everyone has strengths and weaknesses and how determination, self discipline and perseverance can strengthen each individual to pursue their personal gift.

For information or questions regarding this program, please contact Jenea Rewertz-Targui, Arts in Education Coordinator 612-332-3888 or jenea@vsaartsmn.org.