

Story 1

Each arts experience has the ability to transform lives, uplift the spirit, feed the soul, and bring people together. The Grand strives to make its performances and programs affordable and accessible so that people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds are able to experience the performing arts. Recently, a mother called us because her first grader, who is on the autism spectrum, was frightened to come on his field trip to the theater. She requested to bring him in ahead of the trip to give him the opportunity to experience the theater at his own pace. He arrived a frightened six year old and left with a huge smile on his face, loving all things associated with the theater. He told his mother and Grand staff that he could not wait to come the following week and he now wants to work in a light booth someday.

Story 2

Who knew when Linwood learned to properly sing the “Happy Birthday” song it would forever change his life? During his childhood he was often criticized for how he talked. He grew up lacking confidence in himself. After an early retirement Linwood auditioned for the Ragtime production at Delaware’s Wilmington Drama League. Taken backstage by a vocal coach, within an hour he’d grasped the proper way to breathe and enunciate his words while singing that famous song. Thus, his love for the arts was born! Linwood produces his own radio and television shows. In 2015, he and his ballroom dance partner’s raised over \$20,000 within a 2-year period while dancing for the babies at the March of Dimes fundraisers. No doubt embracing the arts unleashed Linwood’s confidence. As a prominent voice in the community it’s evident the arts ultimately paved his destiny to becoming President of the NAACP Delaware State Conference.

Story 3

The artist contracted to provide painting activities for the Collaborative Effort to Reinforce Transition Success, Inc. (C.E.R.T.S., Inc.) became involved in a project with students from the Engineering Department at the University of DE. It was requested that adaptive painting devices be developed to assist adults with multiple, severe disabilities. Students had to assess the flexibility and adaptability of construction materials as well as design to compensate for the lack of hand, wrist and arm dexterity of our attendees. Unable to communicate verbally, one of our participants using a wrist adapter created that held a paint brush, became physically animated through arm motions and a heightened amplification of his usual shouting voice with every brush stroke he was able to make while painting a Valentine’s Day box. His reaction to his enhanced ability to engage in this art project was infectious to all participants, staff and guests involved that day, creating a joyful and fulfilling experience for everyone.

Story 4

I eventually had to stop working full time because of MS symptoms. For awhile, I felt seperated from the word but I began to volunteer at the Wilmington Drama League and then at First State Ballet Theatre. In the arts, I found a new purpose to go out into the world again and I am now apart of arts family in Delaware.

Story 5

"All of my art education came from the Delaware Art Museum. When I make art, I feel like it's what I'm supposed to be doing. The experience at the Delaware Art Museum really changed my life." Brice is a college freshman at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, PA pursuing a BFA in illustration. She dreams of becoming an art teacher and publishing a graphic novel. When Brice was a child she received a Red Apple Scholarship for the Delaware Art Museum's Summer Art Camp. It was because of this experience and the hundreds of hours she volunteered her time at the Museum, that she decided to pursue an art career. This is just one of the many stories that show the significant and long-term impact the arts have on individuals within our community.

Story 6

Qualifying and quantifying the effectiveness of OperaDelaware's appearance at the Cokesbury Continuing Care Unit is difficult but having the director tell us that some of the people attending the "concert" hadn't been as alert as they were in weeks during the singing speaks volumes of how the effect is instantly visible.

Story 7

We at OperaDelaware believe in the healing power of music. Since 2015, we have partnered with Nemour's/Al Dupont Children's Hospital to bring the beauty of opera to staff and patients by holding rehearsals in the hospital's atrium. Here is one family's story: "After a stressful pre-operative physical therapy appointment at the hospital a few weeks ago, we were thrilled to walk through the atrium just as that day's OperaDelaware performer began her first song. My daughter, whom I typically have to chase through the halls or carry so as not to lose her, froze. "As the singer's powerful voice rose dramatically and soared through the atrium, my daughter's face rose in response, and she stood still, spellbound. She looked over at me, with an expression that said, "Can you believe what we're hearing?" Doctors report that the same little girl was singing the opera while heading into surgery.

Story 8

The time was right before lunch; the place was a seventh grade English language arts class. Those present in the classroom included a bunch of 13- and 14 year-olds, a "regular education" teacher, a "special education" teacher, and a national champion slam poet, Gayle Danley. The students had been prepared for this workshop with three lessons beforehand. We read some of Ms. Danley's poems and listened to her perform some of them on audiotape. We heard excerpts from an NPR program, "Fresh Air," as Terry Gross asked about her writing process. We had written poetry ourselves and even performed it aloud for one another. But none of us had yet composed nor performed "slam" poetry. And one of us - I will call him James - had yet to write even one word...about anything...in poetry or prose...despite his teachers' best efforts to encourage him to do so. However, he was clearly enraptured by Gayle's words, her performance style, her "recipe" for crafting "slam poetry." When it was time for the students to select an incident from their own lives and begin to create their own poems, James picked up his pencil and wrote. Page after page became filled with his words. The bell rang for lunch. He asked us if he could stay in the classroom and keep writing. We later learned that James' mother was to be released from jail later that day and it turned out that he had a lot of love he wanted to pour over her. So he just wrote it all out. Gayle had given him "the recipe." When an event in someone's life, an artist teaching the nuts and bolts of her craft, and an art form converge in time and space, life-altering learning occurs. This is the power of the arts.

Story 9

One Saturday in February, twenty members of the Sankofa African Dance Company, delighted elderly patients at Pinnacle with the deep staccato voice of the African drum, and the poise and beauty of ten African Ballerinas. Upon arrival at Pinnacle, the Sankofa Dancers and Drummers launched a one-hour presentation of African music and dance. Supported by wheel chairs and attendants, approximately 100 elderly clients "rocked and rolled" for more than an hour. After the presentation, the Sankofa Dancers paired with patients to wheelchair dance. Patients were alert, enthusiastic and curious. With great effort, several patients in the front row managed to stand and with help swayed and moved to the rhythm of the drums. A 90-year-old patient was given the royal treatment. She sparkled as the dancers surrounded her and each dancer serenaded "the queen of the day" with an on-the-spot created dance. Spreading the arts to the elderly was our mission for the day.

Story 10

"ARTS AS PREVENTION" In the early 90's while raising my son on Wilmington's East Side, I discovered the power of the Arts in rescuing young boys from the ravages of the City "street." Over the long summers, I encouraged my son to bring his friends to my Basement Gallery, equipped with artss tools. The six young boys, were encouraged to play music, do creative writing (Rapp), and paint. Four of the six boys stuck with the program, and would always finish their tasks, while two would always leave in a hurry to get back to the street, All four boys who stayed focused on the Arts, did well in school, graduated from High School and College and are leading productive lives. Unfortunately the two boys who would always leave to go back to the street, revolved through the prison doors. I produced a Documentary "ARTS AS PREVENTION" which is now shown in my Art Gallery and in Community Centers.

Story 11

A year ago I watched Derek Jeter explain to Seth Meyers how a children's book I illustrated was selected by Barnes & Noble for a national story time event. A year before that, I was having serious doubts about pursuing a career in children's books. In fact, I had multiple conversations with friends about getting into real estate, because I thought real estate would offer enough flexibility for me to still draw when I had the time. Since then, I've learned what can happen when you devote yourself to a craft, and practice every single day so that you're ready when an opportunity presents itself. Of course, showing gratitude and respect for those who help you reach your goals is just as important as being prepared. So, the moral of this anecdote is to always believe in yourself, and to make sure you appreciate those who believe in you, too.

Story 12

Clear Space Theatre offers "Broadway Legends", a class for older adults. Students learn songs and dialogue from a classic Broadway musical. "Marian" was a new student in class. This was her first outing since her partner died. She landed a solo part in the final concert. After the performance, Joan said it was the first time she had felt happy since the death of her loved one and the class was a turning point in her grieving process.

Story 13

When Coastal Concerts took the Marian Anderson String Quartet to First State Community Action Agency in Georgetown, DE in January 2015, most of the children had never seen, or heard, a violin. The youngsters sat in rapt attention as the all-woman ensemble demonstrated the different ranges and tones of the violin, viola and cello, and played musical selections to show how the instruments work in harmony. One asked how sounds are made and was invited to pluck the cello's strings as the cellist played a simple tune. Another, curious about the instruments' weight, was allowed to hold a violin and the cello. A third created a teachable moment when she asked if men also play string instruments, prompting a quartet member to explain that, for many years, professional musicians were exclusively men. Students may not have recognized the works performed that day, but they had an experience they'll never forget.

Story 14

The Art Cart features a mobile cart stocked with various art supplies that moves through the cancer center offering patients and caregivers art projects they can do while they are receiving chemotherapy. Through this unique project, artists and trained volunteers from the Cancer Support Community Delaware work individually with patients and their caregivers assisting them with expressive art activities that will ease the anxiety, depression and stress often experienced in a hospital setting. During one visit, an adult daughter had accompanied her Mom to her chemo appointment. In the chair next to them was a very anxious woman, there for her first round of chemo. The daughter painted a black polished stone with bright colors and then wrote the word HOPE in the center of the stone. In a touching gesture, she then gave the token of caring to the frightened woman. This act of kindness made all the difference!

Story 15

The Wilmington Children's Chorus (WCC) serves over 300 diverse youth and spreads hope and harmony throughout our city, state, and world. The tuition-free model creates a program where youth of all backgrounds learn skills, create art, and build friendships across traditional cultural and social boundaries. Comments on member surveys show the impact that WCC has on the youth of Wilmington: "I have learned that the difference between talent and skill is hard work." "It has challenged me to think outside of the box and throw myself completely into the music." "I met a lot of interesting people that are like my second family." "I can be me." "WCC has given me the confidence that high school has taken away from me." "WCC has shown me how to be comfortable and trust myself, even when faced with a challenge that seems impossible."

Story 16

The Creative Arts Club (CAC) at The Delaware Contemporary links vocational students with professional teaching artists in a weekly after school program where members explore the arts both individually and collaboratively. CAC provides a safe environment for approximately sixty students of all abilities and backgrounds where they are free to express themselves creatively without fear of ridicule or rejection. One CAC member who is on the autism spectrum has blossomed within this community of artists. Over the past four years this young man, who once was afraid to fail, has developed confidence to experiment, fail, and ultimately succeed with the support of his peers and instructors. Based purely on artistic merit, his solo work of insightful digital and sculptural works was featured in the 2016 annual student exhibition that earned him the coveted Curator's Choice Award. Because of this safe haven students continue to grow and develop critical life skills.

Story 17

Mélomanie recently commissioned and performed a new musical work to honor music teacher Violet Richman's long, influential career. The piece, "Ultraviolet," by composer Mark Hagerty, premiered at the school where she had taught. Former students and colleagues traveled from far-flung places to attend. One such student, a professor at UNC-Chapel Hill, could not attend. Instead, he captured the spirit of Violet Richman's influence in a letter. He wrote, "...Violet taught me the joy of music. Through her I learned to listen with my heart and my head...Through the harmonies she taught us I learned to hear different and varied voices, not only in music but also in people. Violet taught us how to love music and how to think about it as well." Music continuously informs our lives. Equally, music honors our lives.

Story 18

As Delaware Shakespeare toured shelters, prisons and community centers with a production of PERICLES last fall, the title character's perseverance in spite of incredible obstacles resonated with audiences — but few more than Katrina at the YWCA Home-Life Management Center. "I, too, have been down on my luck and not at my best," Katrina said. "I was trying this, trying that. I had almost given up." Katrina, a veteran and a mother, recalled days when she could barely function as she struggled to provide for her child. She was at the shelter trying to get back on her feet when she saw Pericles, her first Shakespeare performance. "I found myself relating — so intrigued, so captured, so motivated to just keep fighting," Katrina said. "I did just that. I am in my new apartment today! And to think, I would NEVER have seen this performance if I had not been at the shelter!"

Story 19

Throughout my 30 years of creating art therapy programs for children and adults with multiple disabilities, I am awestruck by our participants that impact my life daily. Haley began attending our sessions as a nonverbal 12 year old with cerebral palsy / medical complications. Despite many challenges, Haley desperately wanted to paint independently. We obtained an IV pole and arm slings to allow her arms to swing freely. Haley eagerly tested adaptive devices / textures to create paintings that expressed her emotions within. My daughter would assist Haley, and even without words, they quickly became friends. This friendship strengthened when Shayla experienced a severe concussion. It was Haley who now inspired Shayla. Now 10 years later... Haley creates large "masterpieces" with her robotic arms designed to mimic the range of motion of a human arm. She paints independently using molded paintbrush tools. Haley brightens our discussions with her automated communication device, "I drew beautiful me". As she creates her paintings, Haley's smile lights up the room, and my heart, as she participates fully in each art session.