

Artists with Disabilities Access Program: Professional Development Support for Artists with Disabilities Support for Organizations



Justin Cooper | *Chicago, Illinois*

Justin Cooper is a Black visual artist and disability advocate who has worked professionally in art and film since 2012. The lack of media representation amongst people with disabilities motivated him to work on his own documentary film, “The Wheelchair Chronicles.” As an advocate, Justin works as the president of the Young Professionals Council at Access Living along with working with the racial and social justice advocacy group Advance Your Leadership Power (AYLP). He also serves as a committee member for the annual Chicago Disability Pride Parade, as a member of the Chicago Disability Activism Collective (CDAC), and as a board member for the Illinois Partners for Human Service (IPHS).



Alyson “Annette” Eshelman | *Springfield, Ohio*

Alyson “Annette” Eshelman’s Appalachian heritage and faith have guided her creative outlet. Her BS in art and home economics from Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky, set her on a path exploring and experimenting with fabric and fiber arts. While pursuing an MFA at Bowling Green State University, Eshelman participated extensively in solo, group, and juried exhibitions, receiving numerous awards for her work. In 2007, Eshelman returned to her “home place” in Southpoint, Ohio, with her husband and two young daughters for a year to re-immense herself in the Appalachian culture and LifeWays. She maintains a home studio, where she both continues to create new works for exhibitions and accepts commissions for private and religious collections. For the past 20 years, Eshelman has interwoven her work as an artist and art teacher. As a teaching artist, Eshelman shares a sense of wonder in the creative process with her students. She has been inside juvenile detention facilities, in-patient recovery centers, inner-city community centers, park districts, daycare centers for individuals with disabilities, senior centers, residential homes, schools, colleges, and museums. She thrives on creating customized art exploration and art learning experiences that draw from the strong values and characteristics of her Appalachian heritage: identity, observing the natural world, and self-expression through the act of creating. Recently retired from the Springfield Museum of Art, Eshelman created a rich combination of immersive art education learning experiences that engage all audiences.



Deborah Griffing | *Columbus, Ohio*

Deborah Griffing is a professional studio artist with a BA in ceramics and an MFA in painting from the Ohio State University. She received the Ohio Arts Council’s Individual Excellence Award in 2002 and 2013, and her work is included in the permanent collections of the Greater Columbus Convention Center. In 2005, Griffing joined Goodwill Columbus to develop Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery, which is now a recognized arts program providing income and support for many artists with disabilities and other barriers. She has been a keynote speaker at the Quilt Surface Design Symposium in 2016, the Columbus Cultural Arts Center in 2015, and the Ohio State University’s Urban Arts Space in 2013.

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Cary Johnston | *Columbus, Ohio*

Cary Johnston is the creative director and founder of Shopworks Theatre Company in Columbus, Ohio. Shopworks is an adult day habilitation program that serves the developmental disability community through theatre arts. Johnston has led the troupe to be actors for hire, employed by the Autism Society of Central Ohio, Ohio History Center, and other organizations. Johnston presented “Reducing the Use of Physical Interventions through Skill Building” at the NAAD Conference and has worked with VSA to develop the Autism and Ambassadorship program, which led to her speaking nationally for the LEAD Conference 2017. Johnston is also the recipient of the 2018 Franklin County Star Award.