

Connecticut Forum on Career in the Arts for People with Disabilities

BIOS OF SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

Keynote

Paula Terry

Paula Terry is Director of the AccessAbility Office at the National Endowment for the Arts. She has established leadership initiatives in creativity and aging, universal design, careers in the arts for individuals with disabilities, arts in healthcare and arts in corrections. In recognition of Terry's work, the National Endowment for the Arts has received many awards including: The Ella T. Grasso Award for the NEA's role in the first professional arts program in a U.S. hospice; excellence in accessibility leadership by the Christopher Reeve foundation and the John F. Kennedy center for the performing arts. Terry received a B.S. degree and did graduate work in the fine arts at Louisiana State University and Garrett University, Evanston, Illinois.

Stephanie Moore

Stephanie Moore is Director of Visual Arts at *VSA arts* in Washington, D.C. She is responsible for providing direction and production of all visual arts exhibitions and events for *VSA arts*

at the national level. She has supervised the Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts initiative in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Arts and Disability Center since 2002. Moore is a visual artist and independent curator. She earned a B.A. in Art History and Studio Art from James Madison University, and an M.A. in Museum Studies/Nonprofit Management and Art of Underrepresented Cultures from George Washington University. She has devoted much of her academic research to the lives of artists with disabilities, their work, and the historical, emotional, and sociological influences that have inspired their artistic expression.

Breakout Session Speakers/Performers

Ekiwah Adler-Beléndez

Ekiwah Adler-Beléndez is a poet from Amatlan, Mexico who has cerebral palsy and whose powerful verses have mesmerized audiences in Mexico and the US. He began writing poems and stories at the age of 10 and is the author of three volumes of poetry: *Soy* (I Am); *Palabras Inagotables* (Never-ending Words); *Weaver* (2003), his first book in English. Adler-Beléndez authored *The Coyotes Trace and* has written and acted in three plays. He received honorable mention at the

national prize for the youth and scholarships from FONCA, the National Institute for Support of the Arts. He has an extraordinary ability to relate to his audience, heart to heart.

Margaret Bodell

Margaret Bodell is the Public Art Coordinator for the Department of Cultural Affairs in New Haven. For over 25 years Margaret Bodell has been a pioneer in the movement of inclusion in the art world and championed creative vocations for persons with disabilities. She has launched and developed community based galleries and projects such as New York's Pure Vision Arts, and Brooklyn's LAND gallery which provide exhibition opportunities and mentorship for aspiring artists and artisans. As a curator, Bodell works to broaden the scope of corporate collecting to include work by diverse populations. Other current projects include Umbrella Arts a gallery in New York City and the curation of Artview, the mid Atlantic regions largest exhibition of artists with and without disabilities.

Patti Clay

John Denner

John Denner is an internationally-recognized guitarist. Born without his right hand, he taught himself to play using a make-

shift picking device. Denner has been featured in the “I Did It!” section of ‘Play Guitar!’ and has played at the Iridium in New York City with Les Paul. Denner joined Operation First Response at Walter Reed Army Medical Center providing entertainment for recovering soldiers and their families. He has allied with the Amputee Coalition of America to ensure that others with limb loss receive the support and assistance they need to make their dreams come true.

Heather M. Gates

Heather M. Gates is President/CEO of Community Health Resources, one of the largest mental health agencies in Connecticut. As a result of her leadership, knowledge of the issues and advocacy for quality care, she has been appointed to statewide policy task forces including the Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council, DMHAS Medicaid Rehabilitation Option Advisory Committee, Mental Health Policy Council, Alcohol and Drug Policy Council, Gates worked at the Mass Department of Mental Health as Director of Managed Care. She held behavioral health positions in Massachusetts involved in vocational services, residential programs and supportive housing. Gates received her BA from Hampshire College and MBA from University of Massachusetts.

Chris Kelly

Aaron Kubey

Aaron Kubey is the first deaf Executive Director/President of the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD). He is an actor, producer and has worked on numerous television, film, and theatrical productions. Kubey recently produced and acted in 'Beyond Therapy', which received outstanding reviews by The New York Times. He has worked with the Los Angeles Little Theatre of the Deaf, deaf west in Los Angeles, centerlight theatre in Chicago, and the New York Deaf Theatre. Kubey graduated from Model Secondary School for the Deaf at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and was first deaf student to be admitted to and graduate from DePaul University where he earned his BFA in Theatre Studies from the Theatre School at DePaul.

Mary Lou Lauricella

Arlene Lugo

Arlene Lugo is the Program Director for the CT Tech Act Project, a statewide program that helps individuals with

disabilities access the assistive technology they need. The Connecticut Tech Act Project, a program within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, offers training and technical assistance on assistive technology and provides information on assistive technology devices and services, funding sources, demonstration centers, and device loans.

Lugo received her Bachelors degree in English from the University of Albany, New York and received her M.S. in Professional Counseling/Vocational Rehabilitation from Central Connecticut State University in 2003. Arlene worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services for over 5 years and is a certified Assistive Technology practitioner.

Jennifer Morris

Jennifer Morris joined Siegel Artist Management in 1998 and became a partner in the agency in 2002. Over the course of her career, Morris has worked in many different facets of the performing arts industry including general manager for the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, special events manager for the Town of Brookline, marketing director for the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines, and marketing and touring manager for Ballet Iowa. Morris currently serves on the Executive Committee

of NAPAMA (North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents), Dance/USA Agents' Council and as a panelist and mentor at ArtsMidwest, Performing Arts Exchange and Pennsylvania Presenters Spring Conference. Siegel Artist Management represents contemporary dance, classical, jazz and world music ensembles and special attractions

(www.siegelartist.com)

Allyson Pequita

Allyson Pequita is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). Pequita, a nationally certified Rehabilitation Counselor, provides vocational guidance and rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. She sits on the BRS Transition Committee for Youths in Transition. As a vocational coordinator, Pequita advocated for at-risk adolescents, networking in the community for employment opportunities and job shadowing experiences for young adults with disabilities. She has a passion for the arts; has danced and sang competitively and has written and published her own poetry. In her work with at-risk adolescents, Pequita incorporated her students' passion for the arts and fostered their strengths and abilities. She earned her BS in Psychology from

York College of Pennsylvania and her M.Ed. from Springfield College.

TRACY Perugini

Tracy Perugini is the Community Work Incentive Coordinator, part of the Department of Social Services at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. Perugini provides individualized benefits counseling for consumers who receive social security disability benefits to help them understand how working affects their benefits, and the work incentives to which they are entitled. She conducts statewide presentations to community organizations providing accurate information on social security disability programs. Perugini graduated from Western Connecticut State University with a BA in Justice and Law Administration. She is certified as a WIPA Community Work Incentives Coordinator by Cornell and Virginia Commonwealth University, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration.

Melissa Sands

Monique Silva

Ashley Wolfe

Ashley Wolfe is an accomplished actress with down syndrome. She is a gold medalist in Special Olympics, a national motivational speaker, and a member of the screen actors guild, with credits on NBC's 'Third Watch', and a co-starring role on CBS in 'Jewel'. Wolfe starred in 'Mr. Blue Sky', which premiered on FOX. She attended Simsbury Public Schools; and was the first student with a disability to serve as a graduation speaker. She completed the threshold program at Lesley University, earned a two-year certificate in business services, and completed a third transitional year. Wolfe is a student at Cortiva Institute of Muscular Therapy and is on the board of directors of the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress.

Nancy Wolfe

Nancy Wolfe is an actress, an acting coach and member of actors' equity association, a screen actors guild and an American federation of television and radio artists. Recent credits include: lead role in 'Mr. Blue Sky', the Eugene O'Neill memorial theater playwright's conference, and Hartford stage 'BRAND'. Wolfe has served on theater review and teaching artist review panels for the CT Commission on Culture & Tourism and is on the education advisory board for the

Goodspeed Opera House. Wolfe is Co-Founder/Managing director of COMPANY ONE, is on the theater faculty of the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and is director of the Center for Creative Youth at Wesleyan University.

EVENING PERFORMANCE

The Little Theatre of the Deaf (LTD)

The Little Theatre of the Deaf is the children's wing of the National Theatre of the Deaf. LTD annually performs for thousands of children and adults across the US. Linda Bove introduced LTD to national television when she became a regular member of the 'Sesame Street' cast, and LTD's credits include appearances on 'Sesame Street' and the Disney Channel series 'Out of the Box'. LTD entertains and educates at the same time. Actors amaze the audience with their ability to make a lion roar, a tree bend, or the sun rise 'in the palms of their hands'. Through theatre, they broaden the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Deaf culture, challenge stereotypes on language, communication, disability and promote diversity and inclusion.

Ricky Alfonso

Ricky Alfonso is a trumpeter who is a product of the modern jazz movement with a trumpet style reminiscent of Miles Davis

and Freddie Hubbard. He has performed and recorded with such jazz luminaries Bill Barron, Mario Pavone, and Thomas Chapin, and was featured jazz soloist with the Bill Lowe/Andy Jaffee Repertory Big Band. Alfonso has performed in funk, R&B and commercial bands and in numerous studio recording sessions. He toured and recorded with Joe Cocker and arranged horn parts for Joe's definitive versions of 'Women to Woman' and 'Midnight Rider'. A composer and producer, Alfonso recently released his first recording for Mayeva Music titled 'Hold Back Tomorrow', and is immersed in long term projects with his jazz quartets-quintets and with guitarist Michael Musillami. Alfonso is a full time music educator in the West Hartford.