

# Developing Urban Creative Communities through the Arts in Thailand, Canada, and USA

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## Abstract

Similarities and differences among arts programs for persons with disabilities are discussed with a focus on Very Special Arts Art programs in the USA and the Art for All programs in Thailand. Other examples of arts programs for individuals with special needs in the USA and Canada are also presented. A case for ways the Art for All programs can become an instrument for social change and a model of a creative urban community is also made.

**Keywords:** Arts Communities, Disabilities, Social Change

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## Introduction

This article will discuss some of the similarities and differences in the VSA Arts program (VSAA) in the U.S. and the Art for All programs in Thailand. It will also showcase a few other arts programs in the US and Canada. Then it will make a case for how Art for All can become a creative urban community and an instrument for social change.

In 1976, the National Committee: Arts for the Handicapped (NCAH), was formed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Since then, NCAH has evolved into a tour de force in arts advocacy for underserved persons with disabilities. In 1985, NCAH changed its name to Very Special Arts. In 2009, VSA became VSA Arts: The International Organization on Arts and Disability. For the discussion below the term VSAA will be used. The VSA Arts network is operating throughout the USA and in 65 countries. VSAA receives federal and supplementary state and local funding in addition to private support. Each year 7 million people participate in an enriching VSAA program. VSAA also has an online art gallery featuring artwork by disabled artists from around the world.

The following are the four essential principles that guide VSAA programming and initiatives:

- Every young person with a disability deserves access to high quality arts learning experiences.
- All artists in schools and art educators should be prepared to include students with disabilities in their instruction.
- All children, youth, and adults with disabilities should have complete access to cultural facilities and activities.
- All individuals with disabilities who aspire to careers in the arts should have the opportunity to develop the appropriate skills.

Inclusion teaches us that all, means all. Everybody, no exceptions. The arts invite people to leave familiar territory, to explore new answers, and seek new questions. The arts offer a means to self-expression, communication, and independence. By learning through the arts, students become lifelong learners, experiencing the joy of discovery and exploration, and the value of each other's ideas.

VSAA is committed to driving change – changing perceptions and practice, classroom by classroom, , community by community, and ultimately society. (<http://www.vsarts.org/x16.xml>)

I have been involved with VSAA from its inception in 1976 serving as a presenter, researcher, evaluator, and fundraiser.

One way VSAA has been able to garner support for its programs and showcase the abilities of persons with disabling conditions, has been to partner with state and local cultural arts programs. This partnership has facilitated the integration of persons with handicaps with non-disabled individuals. The general public has had

the opportunity to observe and interact with all individuals, disabled or not. Thus through the VSAA organization, individuals with disabilities have been brought out of the shadows. Through art, music, drama, dance, and creative writing activities, these individuals have broken down barriers, and increased the awareness of the artistic endeavors of all.

### **Art for All**

As a Fulbright Senior Specialist to Thailand's Chulalongkorn University in 2008, I was introduced to the Art for All project/movement. Through the unceasing efforts of Professor Dr. Channarong Pornrungraj, a series of arts camps varying in length from three to five days have been held throughout Thailand for the past 15 years. These camps have been specifically arranged for persons with hearing, visual, physical, and mental handicaps. To my knowledge, there has been no other large effort to provide arts experiences for persons with disabilities in Thailand.

I was immediately struck by the commitment and compassion of the Art for All staff. As a leader for social change, Pornrungraj hired several staff members with disabilities. (Few, if any, in Thailand would hire someone with a handicap). As I understand it, Thai families that have a member with a handicap keep that person sequestered away from public view. The reasoning, as it was explained to me, was done to protect the disabled individual and the family from shame and ridicule. It has been through the Art for All camps that observers from the mainstream Thai culture have become aware of persons with disabilities, and begin to see past their handicap to see their abilities. Since its beginnings in 1997, Art for All has become much more than a series of camps. It is a positive force for both creating communities and promoting positive social change. In this way, persons with disabilities have been brought into the light of day and mainstream culture.

Art for All was developed to accomplish the following four objectives:

1. Instill in young people a respect for human life and to teach them to be upstanding members of society with a contribution to make.
2. Raise the self-esteem of the underprivileged and the handicapped. Moreover, to assist them in achieving their full potential and give their lives greater dignity.
3. Promote sustainable development by encouraging society to show respect for other human beings in all their diversity.
4. Help participants discover a roadmap of development that allows them to live their lives with dignity and not as burdens on society (Pornrungraj, 2006).



Figure 1: Art For All banner. (c) 2008 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

### Three Art for All Camps

I have been a participant-observer at three of the Art for All Camps. In 2008, I observed the hill tribe Art for All Camp in Northern Thailand. The hill tribes have had a long history of marginalization. The mainstream Thai culture has held prejudicial attitudes toward these hill tribes. This camp focused more on instilling an appreciation and reverence for each camper's tribal culture. By making an effort to focus on tribal traditions, and by making the effort to bring Art for All to one of the tribal villages, the participants began to realize their own importance.



Figure 2: Art for All in Akha camp. (c) 2008 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.



Figure 3: Hill Tribe group paints on the earth using dry tempera paint. (c) 2008 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

This was a basis for showing the campers just how important they are and how important their culture is. The Art for All camp I observed had a focus on the use of artistic materials that were available in the villages. Thus, straw became a material for making animals and baskets. The ground became a canvas for drawing with tempera, and for using leaves, and other nature objects to create pictures.



Figure 4: Hill Tribes Straw animals (a readily available materials). (c) 2008 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

One additional factor that made the Art for All Hill Tribe camp meaningful was the media coverage of the events. This was concrete evidence of the campers' artistic work showing the connection to their cultural heritage, and how the two items came together to become an important and newsworthy event (Tuenjai Deetes, personal communication, July 20, 2009).

### The July Art for All Camps

I have been able to be a participant-observer of two very large Art for All camps held in July 2008 and July 2009. I witnessed the effects of the beautiful settings in which each was held. This immediately put campers in a very different and inspiring surrounding.



Figure 5: Setting for one of the Art for All July camps. (c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

Many things impressed me about both these 5-day camps. Disabled artists were presenters thus providing role models of what can be accomplished in spite of so-called physical, emotional, and mental limitations.



Figure 6: Hill Tribes Straw animals (a readily available materials).  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.



Figure 7: Artist painting with her feet.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

Professional artists were the leaders of the numerous visual art, music, and dance activities offered every day. This reminded me of a statement a professor of special education made at a conference a few years ago: “If one can only teach one musical idea or concept, let it be Mozart.” This is exactly what was being offered at the Art for All camps. The campers circulated through a number of activity stations and were exposed to some of the very best traditional Thai music and dance.



Figure 8: Traditional Thai Musicians. The group of children has received recognition from the royal family.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.



Figure 9: Traditional Thai Dance Group.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

### Art for All Campers' Experiences

To provide a “face” to the Art for All participants I have included some brief vignettes that I observed during my Art for All experiences.

I am often asked about the efficacy of having persons who are blind included in two-dimensional activities. As an answer I offer the following. In one painting activity a group of campers were told about the duck-billed platypus that is a strange animal that lives in Australia. Pictures of this animal were shown. (Note: the presenter had tried to bring a stuffed toy in the form of this animal, but was unable to locate one). I noticed one girl that was completely blind. There was a volunteer helping her. The girl used her hands to figure out where on the page she was going to paint the duck-billed platypus. Then the volunteer gave her a paintbrush and told her what color paint was on the brush.



Figure 10: Paint is being mixed for the girl who cannot see (on right).  
(c) 2009 Anderson.  
Reproduced by permission.

It was amazing to see this camper execute the painting.



Figure 11: Volunteer hands a paint brush to the girl so she can finish the painting.  
(c) 2009 Anderson.  
Reproduced by permission.



Figure 12: This is the very first painting the girl who is blind created.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

This camper wanted to take her painting home to show her parents. This was the very first painting she had ever created. Unfortunately, all artwork was kept, so that no camper could take home artwork created at the camp. I photographed her picture and made a print off it so she could take her work home.

This next photo shows a teenager and his painting of the platypus. He was in the same group and is hearing impaired. He “said” he had studied art.



*Figure 13: Boy showing his painting of a platypus. He is hearing impaired and has had some art classes. 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.*

In one activity a well-known television reporter was interviewing campers while they were video taped. The aim was to increase self-esteem and to encourage campers to talk. One fellow who was blind stood up and told the reporter that this was his first Art for All camp. He was so motivated by his experience that he said he wanted to study law and become an advocate for persons with disabilities.



*Figure 14: Boy who is blind (on the right) being interviewed about his Art for All experience. (c)2008 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.*

During another art activity, I noticed a girl in a wheelchair drawing. With the help of an interpreter I asked her how she was selected for the camp. She told me that she had always liked art and had asked her teacher if she could attend the camp.



Figure 15: Girl drawing on a lapboard.  
(c) 2009 Anderson.  
Reproduced by permission.



Figure 16: Here is what the girl is drawing.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

As the reader can see, this girl was quite a good artist for an 11 year old.

Finally one inspiring moment occurred during a clay activity. One boy who was in a wheel chair had almost no control of his arms. Two volunteers removed his shoes and placed clay on a board so he could manipulate the material with his feet. These images speak to the excitement that this camper experienced as he used his toes to move the clay.



Figure 17: Boy using his feet to manipulate clay.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.



Figure 18: Boy showing his excitement  
about what he has made.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission

### **Unique Features of the Art for All Camps Volunteers**

Having been involved in VSAA festivals for more than 10 years in the United States, I noted several unique parts of the Art for All camps.

#### ***Volunteers***

As noted in the observations above, the Art for All camps could not function without a large cadre of volunteers. Many were university students. Some were boy scouts and girl scouts. Others were just interested and compassionate individuals from all walks of life. The campers had a direct impact on the volunteers. Volunteers could see for themselves what the campers with disabilities could accomplish.

#### ***Setting***

Rarely has the VSAA festival been an overnight event. While the festivals might run for several days the festival participants were not put together in a camp situation. I think a major part of the impact of Thailand's Art for All programs is due to the events being set as camps, rather than merely a day program. The individuals who participated spent five days together in this setting. The mere factor of the Art for All events being a 5-day camp had an immediate effect on the participants. For the first time, individuals with disabilities were spotlighted in an important way. They discovered that there were others just like them with the same challenges.

#### ***Organization***

Having administered VSAA events, I am very aware of the effort that is required to produce an arts event. Such an event is made more challenging when its focus is persons with disabilities. I was extremely impressed with the attention to detail required to provide an Art for All camp. One had to consider all of the needs of the campers (medical, emotional, and physical), the types of arts activities, and who was to lead them. Additionally, the organizers had to consider how artistic media was distributed, arts stations were arranged, and how groups of campers were to circulate through each art activity stations. Coordination of important visitors – including one visit by the Thai Princess – was yet another example of great organization. There were many other items I could cite, however I think the reader gets some sense of all that was involved.

#### ***Other Issues***

In addition, there are many other organizational issues to consider: fundraising, camper selection, recruitment of presenters and volunteers, to name a few. Based on my three decades of teaching and working with children with disabilities, I noted again and again the quality of the organization and presentations at the Art for All camps.

### **Five Persons with Different and Complimentary Abilities Make One Genius.**

Dr. Channarong Pornrungrroj has developed a guiding principle called “the Creative Cooperation of Five.” This is a guiding theory and philosophy of the Art for All camps for persons with disabilities. By bringing together five people with different types of handicaps and complementary gifts, one creative genius can be formed.

Thus one person, who is blind, can contribute verbal and listening abilities. One person who is deaf can become the eyes for the group of five. An individual with a physical handicap (for instance, one who is missing an arm or a leg, or is wheelchair bound) can be the thinking part of the genius, i.e., the brain for the group. The person with intellectual challenges contributes to the group's mobility with their legs and arms. The final member of the group of five is someone without disabilities who becomes the group facilitator helping to coordinate the contributing abilities of the other four. According to Dr. Channarong Pornrungrroj:

All those who participate in the Art for All events are given challenges to encourage creative problem solving through the arts. Art for All camps are specifically set in beautiful and peaceful locations that inspire the entire creative process and encourage peaceful thought and reflection. The various arts experiences are planned to offer an appropriate outlet for frustration and stress. Additionally, all are focused on producing arts works and performances that are meaningful and artistic. The social interactions that occur during the creative processes foster greater compassion and understanding of each person's differences and similarities. Not only are the creative mental processes stimulated, the very manipulation of artistic media strengthens fine motor skills. (Pornrungrroj, 2006)

The principle of five equals one is a fantastic concept, idea, and philosophy. As campers moved around the various art stations, many were placed in groups that had persons with the 4 types of the disabilities represented in the camp. Each group was led by a camper without handicaps. In some instances, I observed group members working well together despite their individual limitations. However in the specific reality of the art stations and presentations at the Art for All camps, some special education specialists observed that it was not always possible to totally implement the five equals one ideal (Ross, personal communication, July 7, 2008). To do so might require additional training for both the non-disabled leader and each selected disabled group member. Added practice accompanied by very careful selection of the disabled members of each group might result in greater success of the five equals one genius idea. Also not every group, no matter the composition of its members is able to work as a team. This fact is true for groups with no members who have disabilities (Yalom, 1995). However the five equals one genius is a worthy goal and philosophy to work toward.

### **Training for Presenters**

In implementing VSAA festivals, we discovered that there was a specific need to train presenters so that they could understand and adapt presentation methods and materials to ensure a very highly successful outcome. Currently VSAA provides such training through its Communities of Practice Programs. The aim of the program is to support educators to design high quality, inclusive arts learning opportunities for students. The program supports participants to:

- Design engaging, flexible, and meaningful standards-based arts curriculum.
- Design valid assessment tools to inform differentiated instruction.

- Collect and document student-learning evidence.
- Share insights about student learning and useful inclusive instructional strategies with the field of education. (<http://www.vsarts.org/x2252.xml>).

During the Art for All July camps, I observed a mixture of presenters with obvious special training along with others that had no such training. Knowledge of the abilities of the campers and ways to adapt artistic media is essential, especially for safety reasons (Anderson, 1994). I urge future planners to consider special training and screening of planned arts activities to eliminate possible medical and safety concerns. It is also extremely important to offer arts experiences that are disability appropriate and age appropriate. I also think parents and volunteers would benefit from this training; indeed, parents might contribute to such important and necessary training.

### **Number of Participants and Length of Art for ALL Camps and VSAA Events**

Two other differences between the VSAA festivals and the Art for All camps as I experienced them, relate to the scope and size of the events. It is much easier to plan and implement a festival or camp that is only a day or two and is planned for a small number of participants. When events are longer and planned for a larger number of participants, greater organization, planning, and coordination are required. There is always a danger of these events becoming too successful leading to events with more and more participants. With larger events comes the probably of the planners being overwhelmed and more problems occurring.

I wonder if the time has come in the life of the Art for All programs to consider smaller events. Certainly the economic downturn has had an impact on finding sufficient funding for large camps. A series of smaller Art for All events could focus on arts skill-building that would carry over into the daily activities of the participants. In fact, such events could be training opportunities for future residents of the proposed Art for All Village.

As the Art for All enterprise plans for the Art for All Village, it is important to be aware of research conducted in the U.S. on the effects the arts have on individuals with, and without, disabilities.

Arts experiences can lead to learning skills that carry over into academic learning and vocational preparation. This idea has been documented (with systematic “hard” data) in both the U.S. and in Canada (Deasy, 2002; Douglas & Williams, 1994; Eisner, 2002. Eisner, 1998; Gerber & Guay, 2006; Graziano, Ingram & Riedel, 2003; Peterson, & Shaw, 1999; Harth, 1999; Marantz, 1998; Nyman & Jenkins, 1999; Sallis, et al). Could there be an in-depth skill development and learning component for some Art for All campers?

Prolonged exposure to the arts means having six weeks or more of arts instruction in each art media (art, music, drama, dance, and writing). This approach differs from what is currently practiced by Art for All planners. When schoolchildren in the U.S. have a prolonged exposure to the arts, they have higher math scores, they read at a higher level and their ability to form relationships increases (Jensen, 2001).

There have been numerous funded projects in the U.S. that have demonstrated the link between learning in the arts and academic learning. Most recently the work by Jensen (2001) reported in his book, *Arts with the brain in mind*. Jensen is a scientist trained in all forms of research. His book has caused those who are outside of the arts (neither trained in the arts, nor arts advocates) to support increased arts instruction for all students in public schools.

This is an approach that arts professionals have advocated for decades without changing opinions of administrators and other laypersons. That is, until Jensen (2001), began to study how arts involvement impacts the developing brain.

### Examples of Urban Creative Arts Communities - Le Fil D'Ariane

Over 30 years ago in Montreal, Canada, a gifted artist and special education teacher established a textiles workshop for adults with mental retardation. This workshop is called Le Fil D'Ariane and 20 artisans come daily to create beautiful artwork. The artisans (artisan is the name given to the 20 participants) create all the designs. Five staff members teach the textile technique used. I had the opportunity to visit this unusual studio and interview its founder. I concluded that this place was one of the most aesthetic places in which one could work.

The setting for this workshop is in a beautifully renovated warehouse in the old part of the city. The setting itself is inspiring.



Figure 19: Warehouse where Le Fil d' Ariene is located. (c) 2009 Anderson Reproduced by permission.



Figure 20: Inside the workshop. (c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by permission.

Art therapy is also used to help the artisans deal with emotional issues such as frustration, anger, and disappointment. No artwork produced during the art therapy sessions is ever used for a retail textile.

(<http://www.atelierlefieldariane.org/La%20girafe%20g%E9ante.html>)

Le Fil D'Ariane is an urban creative community. Artwork is sold and the artisans also receive a governmental allowance, which is given as though it is a wage for the work. The artisans have greater self-esteem because they also are earning funds. Le Fil D'Ariane could be one model to consider as the Art for All Village is being planned.



Figure 21: Stitchery by CF.  
(c) 2009 Anderson. Reproduced by Permission.



Figure 22: Noah's Ark Wool stitchery on cloth.  
23.5 inches by 29.5 inches. Created at Le Fil D' Ariane,  
Montreal Canada. (Collection of F.E. Anderson.  
(c) 2010 Reproduced by permission.)

Because the Art for All Village will be a special creative community that will be set in an urban environment, there will be greater opportunities for showcasing the abilities of those who have disabilities to the mainstream community. It can also be a means for bringing people with many differences together. It will have both a unique part (the arts executed by the residents) and an integrative function perhaps represented by joint projects in which everyone contributes.

### Creative Growth

Thirty-five years ago in Oakland, California Creative Growth was established. I had the good fortune to visit this special place. It is set in a huge urban storefront. It is a very busy place with one section where life skills classes are held. There are several other sections where the artists can work.



Figure 23: Drawing by Dwight Mackintosh. (c) Reproduced by permission of Creative Growth.  
(<http://creativegrowth.org/gallery/dwight-mackintosh>)

The Creative Growth Art Center serves adult artists with developmental, mental, and physical disabilities by providing a stimulating environment for artistic instruction, gallery promotion, and personal expression. Artwork fostered in this unique environment is included in prominent collections and museums worldwide. Creative Growth brings in professional artists from the Greater San Francisco Bay Area and elsewhere to teach. The artwork produced by the participants is displayed in a professionally run gallery next door to Creative Growth.  
(<http://creativegrowth.org>)

During the day, there are special classes in socialization, and independent living and counseling. Some of the workshop artists have a large following of art collectors. Internationally recognized scholar of outsider art, John MacGregor has written a book about one of the artists: Dwight Mackintosh: The Boy Who Time Forgot (1990). More recently Borenzstein (2004) has written a book about several Creative Growth artists.

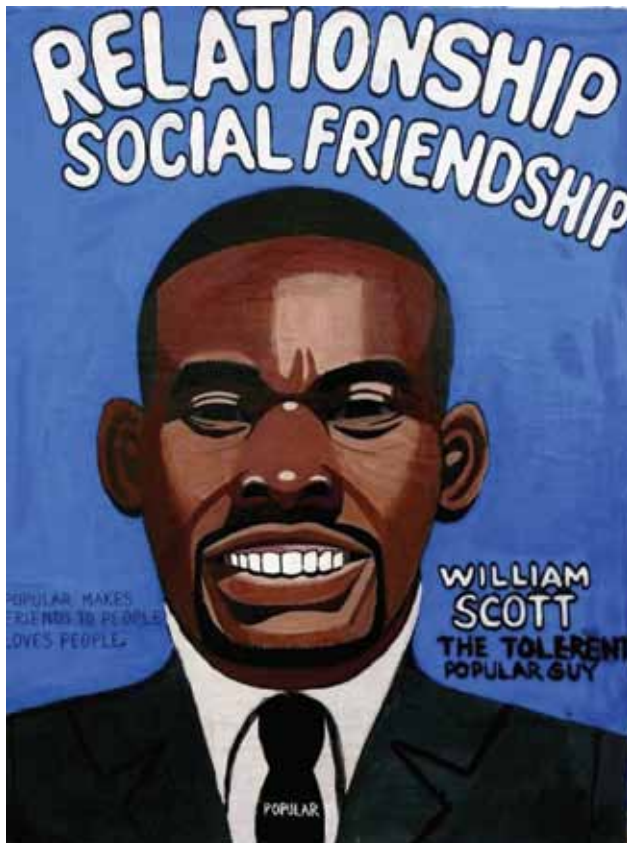


Figure 24: Drawing by Dwight Mackintosh.  
(c) Reproduced by permission of Creative Growth.  
(<http://creativegrowth.org/gallery/dwight-mackintosh>)

### National Institute on Arts and Disabilities (NIAD)

In 1982 in California, the NIAD was founded. This is an artist studio for adults with a variety of disabilities. There are approximately sixty artists with disabilities

who come to NIAD five times a week. They have studio space and are given special instruction by artists. Basic life skills, money management, and socialization skills are also provided. The NIAD has four goals:

- It develops the capacity for creative expression in people with developmental and other physical disabilities, increasing their sense of personal identity and pride.
- It provides a gallery and other exhibition opportunities for their work, thereby validating their art, enhancing their self-esteem and providing them with earnings for their personal use.
- It fosters socialization and inclusion at the center and on field trips to museums, art galleries, artists' studios and community events.
- It increases the public's understanding of the artistic ability of people with disabilities (<http://www.niadart.org/about.html>)

Additionally NIAD has a gallery and describes the artist's work as outsider art. There is also an electronic gallery of artwork by its artists. The NIAD is another model of a creative community for adults with a variety of disabilities.



Figure 25: Woodcut by Ray Brown  
(c)NIAD. Reproduced by permission of the National Institute of Art and Disabilities.  
([http://www.niadart.org/Brown\\_Ray\\_bio\\_bw.html](http://www.niadart.org/Brown_Ray_bio_bw.html))



Figure 26: Crazy Bird Acrylic on Paper by Maria Radilla.  
(c) NIAD. Reproduced by permission of the National Institute of Art and Disabilities.  
(<http://www.niadart.org/Pages/Radilla.html>)



Figure 27: Telephone mixed media by Jean McElvane  
(c) NIAD. Reproduced by permission of the National  
Institute of Art and Disabilities.  
([http://www.niart.org/Jean\\_McElvance\\_bio\\_bw.html](http://www.niart.org/Jean_McElvance_bio_bw.html))

### The Art For All Village

In reflecting on the themes for this first journal issue it is obvious to me that these Art for All camps that have been held for more than 15 years constitute a movement. It is a movement dedicated to social change because it attempts to bring persons with disabilities into the mainstream of life. As plans move forward toward establishing the Art for All Village, this social change will be more evident because many more persons from the main Thai culture will be able to observe and understand that persons with disabilities are persons first and foremost.

### Research Issues and Possibilities

In the first week of my 6-week visit to Chulalongkorn University I was asked to meet with representatives from the central administration. One of the questions asked was: "How can the outcomes of the Art for All programs and camps be measured?" Is it possible to measure something as vast and complex as the Art for All programs?

My answer was, yes! This answer was based on my doctoral training in research and my understanding of both the arts and how to implement complex research studies. It was also based on a countrywide evaluation project I completed for VSAA (Anderson, 1991). Let me explain.

### The National VSAA Evaluation Project

In 1990, VSAA asked me to develop a way to provide both qualitative and quantitative evaluation data on its activities and programs across the U.S. My research team's method involved careful examination of the VSAA goals. Our research had to be based on these goals.

We observed several VSAA sponsored events in three geographically representative and demographically representative states. The VSAA selected these states due to their exceptional programs in the arts for individuals with disabilities. We did site visits and interviewed administrators, artists, participants, parents, and teachers. When gathering data, a series of case studies of participants and arts providers was compiled and became the qualitative part of the research study. Data from interviews and our own observations enabled the development of a multiple series of questionnaires (Seidman, 2006).

These brief questionnaires polled parents, teachers, artists, the individual with disabilities, and other staff involved in VSAA events. Through field-testing, the questionnaire responses were analyzed and questions providing the most revealing data were identified. The questions were limited to ten and became what was called the generic questionnaire. This assessment tool was then made available to all VSAA events that included 1 to 3 all-day festivals and workshops for artists and teachers. Both the case studies and the responses to the generic questionnaire formed the basis for a comprehensive evaluation of VSAA programs. The study's hard data documented the overwhelming success of the VSAA programs.

I mention this project because it was one of the first to attempt to combine qualitative information with quantitative data to evaluate arts programs. The addition of questionnaire data gave us quantitative information to support our case study findings. Interestingly one kind of data supported the other and presented a picture of what was happening in the VSA festivals. Also, it provided valuable information requested by potential funders of VSAA programs (Anderson, 1991).

### **Study of the Effects of the Art For All Programs**

In 2009 after being an observer of the July 5-day camp, I proposed a research study that included both quantifiable and qualitative approaches to document the effectiveness of the Art for All camps (Neuman, 2007). Such a study could benefit fundraising and showcase the importance of the arts for persons with disabilities.

### **Need to Relate Objectives to Research Methods**

The research needs to begin with a perusal of the stated objectives for Art for All. After studying the four Art for All objectives cited earlier in this paper, objective two: "To raise the self-esteem of the underprivileged and the handicapped, and to help them achieve their full potential, and give their lives greater dignity." was the most promising.

There are a number of existing measures of self-esteem (Corcoran & Fisher, 2000). It is very important to be able to use at least one measure that has already been used in other studies to provide a context for the study being undertaken and to test the validity of the results beyond the responses of campers.

One must remember that the Art for All participants have disabilities that might prevent responding to a series of written questions. So, a scale would need to be brief and contain words that campers would understand. The use of pictures instead of words would also be very appropriate.

The Pictorial Thai Self-Esteem Scale (PTSS) (Phattharayuttawat, Ngamthipwatthana, and Pitiyawarnun, 2008) meets these criteria. The PTSS is a version of a self-esteem scale using images. The PTSS contains 20 items accompanied by pictures to explain each question and pictures to accompany the written response options.

It has been significantly correlated with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Corcoran & Fisher, 2000). The RSES has been used in more than 700 studies around the world. Naturally, the PTSS would need to be field-tested by persons with all disabilities before deciding the efficacy of its use (Dyer, 2006).

The second part of objective two would need to include definitions of “full potential” and “greater dignity.” Such definitions would have to include some measureable outcomes. For example, “greater dignity” might mean accumulating statements like, “I am so proud of my work!” or a parent might report, “My child smiled every time he saw his artwork displayed at home.” In other words, to get information to define “greater dignity,” one would have to imply it by the questions asked of campers and parents, both before and after an initial experience at an Art for All event (Sideman, 2006). Answers to questions can be counted if the answer options are either “yes” or “no”. Other responses to questions might be: “never”, “once or twice”, “most of the time” and “all the time”. Then, the response can be counted, so that one can get quantitative information from a questionnaire.

Along with specific questions that have specific response choices, longitudinal case studies of campers could be written. The case studies would include interviews of first-time campers, their parents, at least one Art for All volunteer that had worked with that specific camper. This group of campers should represent the four disabilities (persons with deafness, persons with blindness, persons with mental challenges, and persons with physical handicaps) and include participants without disabilities. The interviews would become the basis for case studies. The case studies could be shortened into brief vignettes of perhaps 500 words with pictures. A summary of the quantitative data gathered could be incorporated into a small booklet that could become an advocacy document for others including fundraisers. (Anderson, 1979) We did this in the VSAA quantitative and qualitative study. When we included summaries of the quantitative data gathered, the result was a short publication that was used to demonstrate the effectiveness of VSAA. It was the combination of hard data and the case studies that presented a fuller picture of what VSAA was about, and how important it would be to fund future VSAA events.

Hopefully several graduate students will consider engaging in such a research project. Undoubtedly, it would yield hard data and fascinating case studies supporting the effectiveness of an Art for All camp (Anderson, 2010). (The entire research proposal is available upon request.)

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