

National Summit on



**Careers in the**

**Arts** for People

with Disabilities



National Endowment for the Arts



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Arts** for People  
with Disabilities



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## **Report on the National Summit on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities**



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Produced by the NEA AccessAbility Office

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Summit on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities was convened July 22–24, 2009, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. It was initiated and presented by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, NAMM Foundation, Quest: Arts for Everyone, AARP, and VSA arts. The Summit gathered participants to review progress made during the past decade concerning educational and career opportunities in the arts, to assess current needs and barriers to full participation of individuals with disabilities as professionals in the arts, and to strategize about ways to enable such full participation. More than 130 distinguished attendees participated at the Summit, including artists with disabilities, arts administrators, educators, disability service groups, and key personnel from participating federal and state agencies. The proceedings were also broadcast as a webinar through the 10 Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers<sup>1</sup> throughout the country.

## Opening Remarks and Sessions

Darrell Ayers, Vice President of Education at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Patrice Walker Powell, Acting Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, opened the meeting and spoke of the need for the arts to be accessible to people with disabilities not just as patrons but also as performers, administrators, and teachers.

The Summit opened with remarks by leaders from the public and private partner organizations. They were followed by the lead artists' panel composed of five accomplished artists in the fields of visual art, theater, creative writing, dance, and design. These artists presented and discussed their own art and career experiences gaining access to training and work.

Through keynotes, panels, and breakout sessions, Summit participants discussed best practices for pursuing education, training, and jobs; Social



(Above) Green Light, a juried exhibition of emerging artists with disabilities presented by VSA arts in the Kennedy Center Hall of States.  
Photo by Katie Lyles Levy

(Opposite) Talkback session with the artists following *Flying Solo: Monologues by Five Deaf Performers* on the Millennium Stage, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.  
Photo by Katie Lyles Levy





Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy, delivers the keynote address to Summit participants.

Photo by Mimi Ho

Security and work incentives (including changes to the financial disincentives in social benefit programs); new research; job support; and arts training issues. Presenters from the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Cafritz Foundation, and the National Center for Creative Aging addressed job support for careers in the arts for persons with disabilities. A series of conversations between former students and their mentor-teachers in the disciplines of dance, theater, and visual arts highlighted the importance of creating relationships and mentoring opportunities for advancing arts careers for people with disabilities.

Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Arts, Culture, and Disability Policy, received a rousing ovation for his keynote that included an announcement that on the following day, July 24, 2009, President Obama would sign the Proclamation of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, demonstrating this country's global commitment to fundamental human rights for persons with disabilities. Dale confirmed the President's support for arts, adding that "never before at any time in history has there been such an opportunity to reshape what we are doing for people with disabilities and what we are doing in the arts community."

## National Study on Careers in the Arts

The preliminary results of the three-year NEA National Study on Careers in the Arts were presented at the Summit by Dr. Carrie Sandahl, who undertook the study with Dr. Carol Gill, principal investigator of the study. Both are associate professors in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The study was initiated in September 2004 and supported by the NEA—with additional support from VSA arts—for the purpose of examining access to careers in the arts, as well as the social, personal, and economic outcomes of training and work in the arts.

The study found that at each step in the development of an artistic career—from initial aspiration, to formal training and education, to ultimately undertaking a career in the arts—people with disabilities face low expectations, lack of access, and overt discrimination. Inadequate health insurance and fear of losing existing benefits remain very real barriers. In addition, they were often expected to volunteer their work or accept low pay. Although this is true for numerous artists, it is particularly difficult for many artists with disabilities who seldom have other paid employment.



## Working Groups: Recommendations

Conference participants divided into five working groups: creative writing, design, media, performing arts, and visual arts. The working groups discussed current policies, standards, and new best practices that would enable people with disabilities to gain increased access to higher education, arts training, and employment opportunities. The groups planned concrete strategies to work with training and educational organizations; the arts community at the state and local level (both public and private organizations); non-governmental foundations and other private groups; state and local agencies that provide incentives and support for education and jobs, such as state rehabilitation agencies; national standard-setting organizations such as licensing boards and accreditation groups; and agencies at the federal level.

Some of the recommendations generated by the discipline-specific groups were applicable across disciplines:

- Overcome the public perception that individuals with disabilities are either pitiable or inspiring.
- Implement universal design, not just in the architectural environment, but also in the design of curricula so that classes are accessible to all.
- Integrate disability studies across disciplines.
- Enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act, including specific guidance to enable artists' colonies, arts educators, and presenters to think of access for performers and presenters, as well as for the audience.
- Bring the conversation about disability into the mainstream by networking with state and local arts agencies, rather than having it occur in isolated sessions.
- Have artists and arts administrators with disabilities serve not only as agency staff, but also as panelists for funding application review and policy discussions at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Make certain that the differences between art as a professional path and arts therapy are clarified.
- Ensure that the accreditation bodies for professional preparation programs evaluate access to programs and facilities, as well as recruitment efforts for persons with disabilities as students, faculty, and staff.
- Make disability access a key component of program funding.
- Broadly disseminate information about how individuals with disabilities can pursue artistic careers without jeopardizing much-needed benefits, especially health care.
- See disability as part of our country's tradition of diversity, and challenge the disability arts community to represent the full range of persons with disabilities.

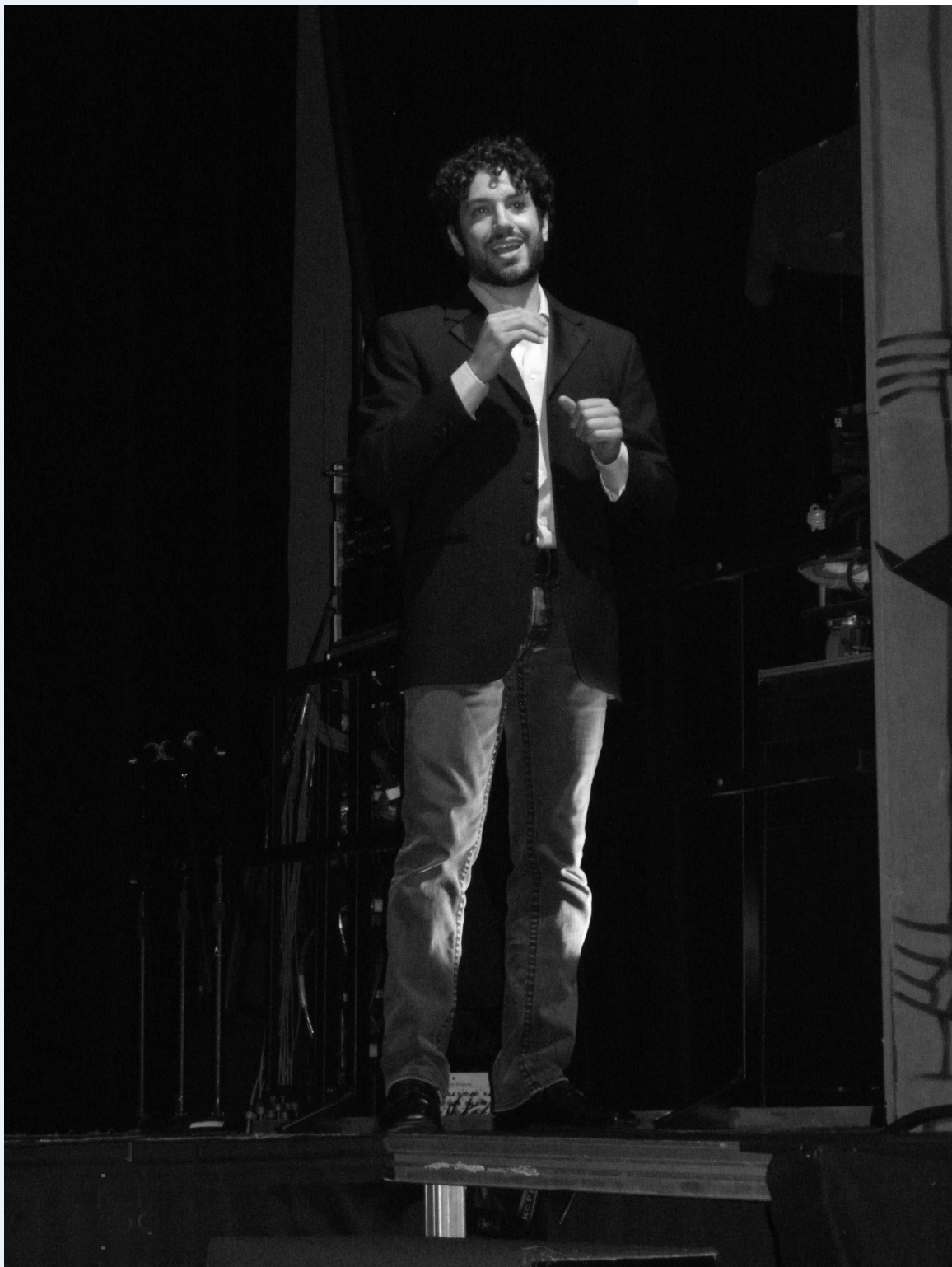
A full list of the recommendations can be found on page 23.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.adata.org>



Aaron Kubey and Ray Bradford present recommendations of the performing arts working group. Photo by Paula Terry





# REPORT

## Introduction and Meeting Overview

On July 22–24, 2009, more than 130 decision makers in the arts, education, government, disability, and research fields convened to address training, education, and employment for people with disabilities who are pursuing arts careers. The National Summit on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities was organized and presented by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, NAMM Foundation, Quest: Arts for Everyone, AARP, and VSA arts. In addition, the Arts Endowment organized a Summit Task Force (composed of 35 representatives from foundations and arts, disability, research, education, and government organizations) to guide the development of the agenda.

Artists with disabilities, arts administrators, educators, disability service groups, and key personnel from participating federal and state agencies were invited to participate. Summit participants reviewed progress made during the past decade concerning educational and career opportunities in the arts, assessed current needs and barriers to full participation of people with disabilities as professionals in the arts, and strategized ways to enable such full participation.

## Background

This Summit was the first since 1998, when the NEA convened the National Forum on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities, which resulted in a number of policy changes and programs—including a national mentorship program with arts groups throughout the country and the addition of a wide variety of arts careers to the Department of Labor’s Standard [Occupational Classification](#)<sup>1</sup> manual. (The manual is used by government agencies in counseling and working with constituents concerning education and career opportunities.) The Forum also led to a



(Above) Green Light, a juried exhibition of emerging artists with disabilities presented by VSA arts at the Kennedy Center Hall of States.

Photo by Katie Lyles Levy

(Opposite) Master of Ceremonies, Tyrone Giordano, for *Flying Solo: Monologues* by Five Deaf Performers on the Millennium Stage, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Photo by Paula Terry



partnership between VSA arts and the Social Security Administration that resulted in the publication of [Putting Creativity to Work](#)<sup>2</sup>, an ongoing series of statewide forums on careers in the arts that have been held in 26 states and territories, and a three-year NEA study with the University of Illinois at Chicago on careers in the arts for persons with disabilities.

Invitees to the 2009 Summit represented a broad range of artistic disciplines, government agencies, academic backgrounds, and non-profits—whether disability-specific, arts-related, or both—as well as individuals who brought specific expertise to the issues at hand.

Prior to their arrival, participants were asked to read a number of articles and reports, including four [issue papers](#)<sup>3</sup> commissioned by the Arts Endowment, to ensure that the Summit's discussions began at a level of shared understanding about key issues. These issue papers explored:

- **Funding**, and the enormous impact that the arts have on our economy (by Deborah Lewis, consultant, Arts Access Now);
- **Technology**, highlighting both the potential for new technologies to increase access for artists with disabilities and the pitfalls when technology is not universally designed to provide a single solution that accommodates all people (by William Clymer, Associate Professor, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology);
- **Legal issues**, especially those that had a direct impact on artists with disabilities (by Carrie Griffin Basas, Assistant Professor, College of Law, University of Tulsa); and
- **Higher education**, exploring the direction and orientation of college and university disabled student service programs (by Carol Funckes, Associate Director, Disability Resources, University of Arizona).

In addition, Mary Margaret Schoenfeld of Americans for the Arts chaired an Issue Papers Panel during the Summit where participants posed a wide variety of questions to the authors of the papers.

## Opening Remarks

Darrell Ayers, Vice President of Education at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Patrice Walker Powell, Acting Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, opened the meeting and spoke of the need for the arts to be accessible to people with disabilities not just as patrons but also as performers, administrators, and teachers.

Their welcoming remarks were followed by comments from a number of distinguished attendees who represented the Summit's partnering agencies:



Summit participants check in at the registration desk.

Photo by Mimi Ho





Representatives of the Summit partnership: Richard Balkus, Darrell Ayers, RoseAnn M. Ashby, Patrice Walker Powell, Kathy Martinez, Faith McCormick, and Soula Antoniou. Photo by Mimi Ho

- Soula Antoniou, President of VSA arts, described a number of initiatives her organization has undertaken to work with mainstream venues to ensure that they infuse disability into all their programming.
- Richard Balkus, Associate Commissioner of Program Development and Research at the Social Security Administration, reported on several demonstration projects designed to improve work incentives. He described an administration policy that encourages more organizations that specialize in the creative arts to become part of the [Ticket to Work](#)<sup>4</sup> employment network.
- Faith McCormick, Acting Commissioner of Administration on Developmental Disabilities at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, detailed her agency's programs, which empower individuals in all aspects of community living, including the arts. McCormick stressed her agency's support for the National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) housed at the University of California, Los Angeles, which provides a wide variety of resources to promote the full inclusion of artists and audiences with disabilities in all facets of the arts community.
- The Honorable Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor, underscored the importance of arts to the disabled community and to changing public attitudes about disability.
- RoseAnn M. Ashby, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services with the U.S. Department of Education, described her office's partnership with the NEA in establishing mentorship programs and other vocational rehabilitation funding streams that can be used to launch and advance arts careers.

## Arts Careers Panel: Issues and Perspectives

The Summit's lead panel consisted of five professional artists who set the stage for this gathering by presenting real-world examples of barriers they had faced in gaining their education and careers, and the strategies





Following the Arts Careers panel, presenters Aaron Kubey and Sandra Gibson.

Photo by Paula Terry

they used to overcome them. The panel was chaired by Sandra Gibson, President and CEO of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, who talked about her organization's partnership with MetLife Foundation to recognize arts groups that demonstrate exemplary leadership in expanding access to the arts.

Visual artist, teacher, and curator Riva Lehrer encouraged artists to “compete with everyone. Shoot for goals that make you work hard.... Second, be an all-around activist. Let them [venues] know they're inaccessible, but do it in ways to open up their thinking about solutions.”

Actor and theater director Aaron Kubey is the first deaf president for the National Theater of the Deaf in its 42-year history. He recognized his mentor from among the Summit participants.

I went to high school here in Washington, D.C., at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf on the campus of Gallaudet University. That's where my career as an artist really took off. I had a mentor there who is here today—Tim McCarty—and it's because of him that I'm standing here before you.

Writer and university professor, Stephen Kuusisto, talked about two of America's greatest poets, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman—both of whom had disabilities—and the importance of understanding that

...there is no normalcy. There is only the enforced and frightening directive delivered from stage left or stage right, off stage, that you had better be normal, and you had better hope to be normal, and you had better struggle to remain normal ...think there is no mainstream. I think there is simply the stream.

Dancer and artistic director Judith Smith talked about how Jeremy Alliger of Dance Umbrella was one of the first people to commission her integrated company, AXIS Dance. That commission resulted in a collaboration with Bill T. Jones, as she described,

That's one of the things I love about my work. I get an opportunity to work with some of the brilliant minds of our time....There was kind of a confusion about whether we were doing art or whether we were doing therapy. I think commissioning work kind of put that hopefully into the grave. I feel like the arts have so much to say, and are such a wonderful way to educate minds and to change ideas about ability and disability, and who's able and who's disabled, and what those definitions are.

Architect Jack Catlin talked about the importance of designing environments for the broadest public that are usable by people throughout

their lifespan—better known as universal or human-centered design. His firm, LCM Architects, was commissioned to design a 44,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art building that houses Access Living, an independent living center in Chicago. The center opened in 2007 and has received a series of awards, including the Sustainable Design Award from the American Institute of Architects.

During the panel, these professionals cited ongoing needs across a variety of disciplines: improving physical access, integrating universal design and “green” design into architecture, the need for autonomous spaces where disabled artists can share their work, the cultural benefits of infusing artists with disabilities into the mainstream, the need for disability-specific training in some fields such as dance, and the need for community feedback and input in design.

## National Study on Careers in the Arts

NEA Director of Research & Analysis Sunil Iyengar introduced Dr. Carrie Sandahl, who presented the preliminary results of the three-year NEA National Study on Careers in the Arts. Sandahl undertook the study with Dr. Carol Gill, principal investigator of the study. Both are associate professors in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The study was initiated in 2004 and supported by the NEA—with additional support from VSA arts—for the purpose of examining access to careers in the arts, as well as the social, personal, and economic outcomes of training and work in the arts.

The study included interviews with 30 individuals; a working group meeting that brought experts together for a series of guided, focused discussions; and a two-month, online focus group with 25 people with disabilities working in the arts. The report highlighted eight areas: developmental issues, making a living, access issues, public attitudes, defining disability art, intra-group differences, activism, and disability identity.

Sandahl reported that at each step in the development of an artistic career, people with disabilities face low expectations, lack of access, and discrimination. Her presentation included a series of quotations from participants in the study that reinforced such findings. (Their identities are confidential.)

- “Initially, I had vocational rehabilitation consultants. They wanted me to go into a secured job being a secretary. That wasn’t my dream.”
- “Really, I think that there are all kinds of covert discrimination that people aren’t aware of. Not taking disabled people as seriously as they would other people is sort of omnipresent in this world.”



Arts Careers panelists  
Judith Smith, Aaron  
Kubey, Jack Catlin, and  
Stephen Kuusisto. Photo  
by Paula Terry



- “Wow, we love your voice and we think you have got the perfect qualities for this, but we have already designed a set, and it has steps, and we’re not going to change it.”

Discriminatory admissions practices and lack of accommodation continue to keep many artists from getting professional training. Arts educators need training about disability accommodations, technology, and alternative art forms. Study participants agreed that mentors are critical to career development. Mainstreaming, however, can sometimes also be an obstacle, particularly for artists with disabilities, as there is a lack of familiarity in the mainstream concerning what is culturally specific to the disability community.

Many people with disabilities pursuing art careers have inadequate health insurance because of the lack of secondary employment, less likelihood of spousal support, and pre-existing condition exclusions. In addition, some people’s fluctuating health and stamina make it difficult for them to function in jobs without significant accommodation. Artists with disabilities also experienced difficulties when interfacing with the Social Security Administration. For example, they received inaccurate information concerning how to prorate arts income. Further, artists are often expected to volunteer their work or accept low pay. Some artists with disabilities were disappointed by the lack of professional standards and the low expectations of organizations that support and promote artistic work by people with disabilities, although others were more optimistic about future development of creative partnerships.

Access remains a crucial issue. Access, Sandahl reported, encompasses structural, programmatic, communication, transportation, technological, stamina, and economic issues. She pointed to a particular lack of awareness of how to accommodate and integrate deaf performers and interpreters. While travel opportunities are critical to career development in the arts and need support, travel expenses for persons with disabilities can be a barrier and may include everything from extra expenses for accessible accommodation to traveling with a personal care attendant.

According to the study, public attitudes tend to conflate disability with tragedy or, alternatively, inspiration. Most media coverage reflects these attitudes and is insufficient, inaccurate, and patronizing. Arts presenters, curators, and agents too often assume that artists with disabilities will always create work on the subject of disability, and this is not generally the case. Artists who do explore the complexities and politics of disability as the subject of their work are often met with confusion and rejection, since their work moves beyond the public’s stereotypical understanding of disability. Study participants observed that the disability art<sup>5</sup> and culture movement has not achieved the political profile of other minority arts communities.

Alana Yvonne Wallace performs a one-woman monologue. Photo by Paula Terry





The importance of artists with disabilities achieving equal status with other minority arts communities was underscored by the Honorable Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, who had remarked at the opening of the Summit,

If media images and art images become more realistic, attitudes toward us will change... We know that attitude is caught, not taught. As someone who has been a musician, it was one of the few times in my life when my disability was not a factor. As a percussionist, people reacted to how well I played and what kind of art I was producing. The Office of Disability Employment Policy understands that media is critical to the employment of people with disabilities. The arts, I believe, are one of the best ways to do it ... we need to look at the laws that really are disincentives, and create incentives to make it possible for folks to work, to save money, and to become part of the mainstream by promoting economic justice.

The experience of individuals with disabilities working in the arts is not monolithic. Within the disability arts community, there is an ongoing tension among the realms of therapy, community arts, and professional arts. In addition, career outcomes are influenced by different art forms, class differences, ethnic variation, and geographic disparity. For example, disabled artists of color report pressure to identify with only one facet of their experience. In some cases, artists may not view themselves as having a disability.

Artists taking part in the study observed that disability arts has not achieved the political profile that other minority arts communities have, but at the same time there was debate about the value of identifying disabled people as a group or as a culture. Conflicts were seen within groups based on race, type of disability, apparent and non-apparent disabilities, and age of acquisition, as well as issues particular to the deaf community. Artists with disabilities may experience tension between political commitments and artistic freedom, as is the case with many artists. Some participants wanted stronger leadership within the disability arts community to advance the status of people with disabilities. There was consensus that formal disability history literature would help promote recognition of disabled people in the arts by both funders and the public.

## **Breakthroughs & Accomplishments**

A series of three projects that grew out of recommendations from the 1998 National Forum on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities were introduced at the Summit by Jonathan Katz, CEO of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. The projects were the topic of a panel

chaired by Don Ehman, Program Officer and Access Coordinator for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

## **Breakthrough I: Statewide Forums**

A primary recommendation coming from the 1998 Forum was that the national dialogue should be taken back to the state level to create conversation among government agencies, service groups, educators, artists, state arts agencies, and non-profits engaged in disability arts on a statewide level, such as VSA arts affiliates. A series of statewide forums was administered by the National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) through NEA grants, with additional support provided by VSA arts and the state arts agencies. The content of these programs generally included an artists' panel, discipline-specific training, performances and/or exhibits, opportunities for networking and resource sharing, discussion of Social Security benefits, and an assessment of recommended actions.

Dr. Olivia Raynor, Director of the NADC, told how the statewide forums have resulted in a wide variety of initiatives including the establishment of networks for artists with disabilities, grants to support continued training and educational opportunities, and the development and dissemination of resources. In a number of states, the forums were followed by professional development workshops and regional networking meetings for artists. The forums also sponsored individual artistic development, training for vocational rehabilitation service providers, an online resource and artists' directory, and an online magazine focusing on the arts and disability.

Celia Hughes, Executive Director of VSA arts of Texas, echoed the importance of follow-up projects:

Follow-up and sustainability are critical to this work. In fact, the whole process is really predicated not on having a one-day conference or a two-day regional conference. The idea from the get-go was to use this opportunity to do a needs assessment and develop a follow-up plan. We were pleased because we had the opportunity to support 11 follow-up activities since 2006.

Sculptor Eric McGehearty spoke about his involvement in the 2005 Texas forum and how VSAarts and the forum have assisted his career goals. As he presented slides of his art, he said, "I'm a person with a hidden disability. I have a very acute case of dyslexia." He talked about the importance of artists not only being trained, but being given the tools to teach others as well. "People believed in me that I not only could be taught, but I could teach others."

Despite the progress that has been made, most of the statewide forum participants are not making a living wage from their art and the fear of

losing benefits remains a powerful work disincentive. The NADC views working with arts employers to make the business case for hiring artists with disabilities as an important priority, and sees bringing in the voice and perspective of young people as critical to that goal.

## Breakthrough II: Mentorship Program

Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility at the Kennedy Center, emphasized the importance of arts administrators in bringing about change, and discussed two of the Kennedy Center's internship programs that involve individuals with disabilities: the HSC Foundation Internship Program and the Experiential Education Initiative Internship. Further, she presented the Mentorship Program that grew out of the 1998 Forum. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Arts Endowment from 2001 to 2004, the Kennedy Center awarded nearly \$250,000 to 31 arts organizations for 43 individual mentees with disabilities. Most importantly, 12 of the mentees gained employment following their mentorship and 14 returned to school.

Subsequently, Mimi Smith of the Amaryllis Theater in Philadelphia talked about that organization's highly successful mentorship experience with Sharon DaVito, who subsequently decided to study theater at Villanova University. Further, she helped the University make its theater department accessible so that she and others with limited mobility could fully participate in the program. Actor Christopher Imbrosciano talked about the importance of his VSA arts apprenticeship in 2006. He said, "Without this opportunity, I would not have had the confidence, education, and experience to pursue this career."

## Breakthrough III: Access to Design Professions

Another successful program supported by the NEA, Access to Design Professions, was described by Elaine Ostroff and Daniel Hunter of the Institute for Human-Centered Design (IHCD; formerly Adaptive Environments). The project began in 1999 with key-informant research in which 33 designers with disabilities from eight countries were interviewed. The project resulted in a book, [Building a World Fit for People: Designers with Disabilities at Work](#)<sup>6</sup> published by IHCD. Research with post-secondary design programs highlighted the lack of accessibility in program facilities, which demonstrates the need for design studios themselves to become accessible. An international network and an e-mentoring program continue to support designers with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration participated by funding a distance learning program and a website, [Careers in Design](#)<sup>7</sup>, for vocational rehabilitation counselors to introduce the potential of careers in design for individuals with disabilities. Paul Mushrush spoke about how



Elaine Ostroff and Daniel Hunter present Access to Design Professions project. Photo by Mimi Ho





IHCD's e-mentoring program assisted his education as an architecture draftsman; he is now working with the program to become a mentor himself and assist other students.

## Summit Banquet

Bill O'Brien, NEA's Deputy Chairman for Grants and Awards, introduced the keynote speakers and spoke about how much he appreciated the inclusive focus of the Summit. He talked about the beginning of his career when he was part of the ensemble at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and the impact that deaf artists had upon his awareness, insight, and career. Prior to joining the Arts Endowment, he worked for six years at Deaf West Theatre in Los Angeles:

I'm one of you. You're one of us. I wanted to just say a couple of things about how important I think it is and how great it is that you've all convened to have this conversation. I think it's really a perfect time to be cracking open these issues and taking a look at them afresh.



Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Arts, Culture, and Disability Policy, received a rousing ovation for his keynote that included an announcement that on the following day (July 24, 2009) President Obama would sign the Proclamation of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, demonstrating this country's global commitment to fundamental human rights for persons with disabilities. Dale confirmed the President's support for arts, adding that "never before at any time in history has there been such an opportunity to reshape what we are doing for people with disabilities and what we are doing in the arts community."



Summit Task Force Chair Victoria Ann Lewis, Founding Director of the Mark Taper Forum Other Voices Project, then spoke to the assembly. Lewis stated,

We cannot address the issues of discrimination and prejudice that continue to limit the careers of disabled Americans in the arts if we cannot pull back and identify and name the social, historical, and political conditions that millions of disabled people share—conditions that limit their efforts to be seen as valuable to our national cultural discussion. Those who shaped this Summit over the past two years hoped that by bringing together all of you who represent the best practices in the arts, education, and advocacy, we will see to the root causes of discrimination and find possible paths to a future free from the institutionalized inequities for artists with disabilities.

Linking disability arts to other arts movements and to the movement for disability civil rights, she concluded, "There's so much knowledge in this

(Top) Kareem Dale, Patrice Walker Powell, Victoria Ann Lewis, and Bill O'Brien who spoke at the Summit Banquet.

Photo by Mimi Ho

(Middle) Victoria Ann Lewis addressing participants at the Summit Banquet.

Photo by Mimi Ho

(Bottom) Lawrence Carter-Long, Jeremy Alliger, and Mary Verdi-Fletcher.

Photo by Paula Terry



room, so much experience, so many successes, so many frustrations ... We are stronger together than we are alone.”

## Education and Training

Steve Peters, President of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, chaired a panel that highlighted the value and importance of relationships and mentoring for advancing arts careers. The panel consisted of three artists and their mentors who have built sustained relationships that not only helped eliminate barriers, but also are great examples of the scholarship of innovation.

Jurg Koch, Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Washington, discussed the importance of access to education for all artists, and how dance and disability merged in the late 1960s as a result of a convergence of developments in the disability rights movement and the arts world. Yulia Arakelyan, who uses a wheelchair, talked about how she met Professor Koch and signed up for his integrated dance course in 2004. This marked the beginning of their relationship, which helped to launch her life-long ambition of becoming a professional dancer.

Israel Hicks, Chairman of the Theater Arts Department at Rutgers University, met the actor Christopher Roberts more than 17 years ago, when Roberts enrolled in a class that Professor Hicks taught at the Actor’s Center in New York City. Roberts, who has vision loss, became one of Hicks’ outstanding students. Both men talked about how they have benefited from their close relationship. Roberts said that “to this day, I am always asking questions in concert with Israel Hicks and what he has taught me.” And Hicks said that, “because of him—as I say this I know it sounds just so tacky but I’ll say it anyway—I see my work differently.”

Riva Lehrer, Assistant Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Curator at Access Living, saw an exhibition of Sunaura “Sunny” Taylor’s art and said, “When I first saw her work, I knew that she was a brilliant artist with amazing talent. Later I found out that she made this work by using her mouth to move the brush.” Both artists discussed how people’s attitudes are the greatest barrier to their careers. Taylor talked about growing up in a family of artists. “I have always painted....I was incredibly confident about myself. I had no political awareness. I knew no disabled people.” However, she recalled that as she began exhibiting her work at age 12:

Immediately, the reactions to my work were ‘She’s so brave. She has a disability, blah, blah, blah.’ In all honesty, I’m 27, and it has not changed....That sentimentality and this kind of desire to keep us distant in a way that has to do with language of pity, which is the flip side of language inspiration.



Education and Training  
Conversations’ panelists  
Israel Hicks and  
Christopher Roberts.  
Photo by Paula Terry



## Social Security and Work Incentives

Judith Smith, Artistic Director of the AXIS Dance Company, chaired the panel consisting of two staff members from the Social Security Administration (SSA)—Susan Wilschke, Director of Program Evaluation, and Joseph Razes, Director of Medicare & Medicaid Services—as well as John Spears, the Outreach Coordinator of Illinois Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities. Panel members remarked that they had opportunities during the Summit to speak with many of the participants about issues concerning their Social Security benefits. Wilschke opened her presentation by saying:

I just want to start by saying that SSA hears that message. I think we've done a lot of things to promote employment and create opportunities for people to work, but obviously there's a lot more to do.... In our most recent strategic plan, which is where the agency identifies our goals and priorities, we do have as goals simplifying our work incentives and making it easier for beneficiaries to go back to work.

She discussed the Ticket to Work Program that is available to recipients of both Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Disability Income (SSI). The program allows people to receive benefits for a period of time while working, as well as employment services, whether from a state vocational rehabilitation agency or providers of their choice. The Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), is another work incentive for the SSI Program that helps people set aside funds for items, services, or skills that are needed to reach an employment goal (e.g., tuition, art supplies, childcare, attendant care).

Razes explained that health coverage usually depends on the applicant's disability and job status. "The problem here is the healthcare puzzle. Earning extra money can mean losing your disability status." He discussed private health insurance, which is expensive and does not cover many of the services that people with disabilities need, and the fact that few insurance groups cover people with pre-existing conditions. Further, he noted that Medicare has some limitations. However, he referred to Medicaid as the "gold card," because "it covers a phenomenal amount of services. Each state is different, but it has limited out-of-pocket costs for individuals."

Spears presented Illinois' health benefits program. "I'm very proud of what we're doing in Illinois," he remarked. One component of the Illinois program is the state's Medicaid Buy-in Program, which allows individuals to earn up to \$3,159 per month after taxes (about \$50,000 a year), or

\$4,250 per month after taxes for a couple. Recipients must have some kind of employment, even if it is a few hours per month, and have paid taxes on that income. Work may consist of a regular job, self-employment, or contractual work. He remarked that “too many people with disabilities are living in poverty because they don’t have the opportunity under SSI, under Medicaid, to save money. We allow you to have \$25,000 in cash assets, stocks, and bonds.” This is in addition to a home, car, or retirement account.

Spears asked the audience, “What’s the number one benefit that most individuals with disabilities are afraid of losing?” The audience responded, “Healthcare.” Spears replied that his agency understands this to be the real problem to full-time employment—the fear of losing health benefits. “So that’s why we have a good Medicaid Buy-In Program and people were able to really get and keep healthcare.”

## Job Support & Issues Panel

John Kemp, Executive Director and General Counsel of the U.S. Business Leadership Network, chaired the Job Support & Issues Panel. He talked about how his organization assists the employment and marketing of people with disabilities, as well as businesses owned by disabled individuals. He said that 50 percent of jobs today are found through social networking. Addressing the importance of the arts in business and in our society, he said, “The arts have the power to enhance critical thinking, problem solving, and the human spirit. The outcome is a strong society, fit minds that create successful social and economic systems.”

Panelists included: Beth Bienvenu, Policy Advisor of Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor; Rose Ann Cleveland, Executive Director of the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation; Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President of the Dancing Wheels Company; Jason Olsen, Social Insurance Specialist at the Social Security Administration; and Liz Ortiz-Mackes, Casting Director/Producer with Casting Solutions. In addition, Amy Kitchener, Executive Director of the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, explained:

So many of the artists that we work with are artists with disabilities, or older artists who are rich in talent, but require government assistance. Many forgo accepting modest grants and apprenticeships for fear of losing Social Security, SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid. These artists, who are the living archives of America’s cultural heritage, are vital assets to their communities, and are physically prevented from participation because of these conflicting situations. After spending these incredible three days together, I’m



Summit participants  
Mary Verdi-Fletcher and  
Douglas Sonntag. Photo  
by Paula Terry

also quite certain that these are not just isolated to our folk and traditional arts fields. I hope this can begin some dialogue. What are the actions we can take collectively to address these issues?

Beverlee Stafford, Executive Director of the National Rehabilitation Association (a membership organization for rehabilitation professionals), presented information about how the U.S. Department of Labor has added a wide variety of arts careers to its Occupational Codes manual. The potential job opportunities added in 2000 include graphic artist, arts administrator, museum curator, theater director, and media artist. The manual is used by vocational rehabilitation counselors when working with clients to gain the education and skills they need for employment.

Gay Hanna, Executive Director of the National Center for Creative Aging, discussed how creative expression is important for older people of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds, regardless of economic status, age, or level of physical, emotional, or cognitive functioning. According to Hanna, the four-year Creativity and Aging Study (initiated by the NEA, conducted by George Washington University, and completed in 2006) showed the health impact of professionally directed arts programs on older adults. Hanna described how participants, with the median age of 80, had fewer falls, required less medication, and had higher self-esteem and more social interactions, compared to other older adults in the study's control group. Speaking of these results, she explained, "We figured that the savings in medication, if it's just eight cents a day, would be over \$1 billion per year in Medicaid costs."

Finally, a number of recommendations for increasing access to education and jobs were presented by the panelists and audience members. Funding is needed to offset accommodation expenses, provide scholarships for education and training, and disseminate information for reconciling work in the arts with government benefits. Programs that promote professional development, such as assistance with grant writing, internships, and marketing, are also necessary. Incentives for both organizations and for people with disabilities are crucial to fostering inclusive training for arts administrators, presenters, arts technicians, and other professions in the arts. The panelists identified a need for disability and inclusion in formal education arts curricula, as well as a need for incorporating art classes in the individualized education plans for students.

It is also essential to find new ways to educate the public about disability. Critics, reviewers, and publicists need better understanding of disability's relationship to the arts, as do arts decision makers and audiences in general. Summit participants recommended that grants be awarded to support access accommodations, such as sign language interpreters, audio-describers, assistive listening systems, and structural adaptations. They also recommended incentives for organizations with accessible



venues and policies that welcome and accommodate people with disabilities.

## Working Groups: Recommendations

Conference participants divided by disciplines into five working groups: creative writing, design, media, performing arts, and visual arts. Each group was charged with thinking broadly about challenges and with generating solutions that would assist or advance individuals in gaining increased access to higher education, arts training, careers, and arts opportunities. The groups looked at education and training, the arts community at the state and local levels, non-governmental foundations and other funding groups, agencies at the state and local levels that provide vocational services to persons with disabilities, national standard-setting organizations, and agencies at the federal level.

Some of the recommendations generated by the discipline-specific groups were applicable across disciplines:

- Overcome the public perception that individuals with disabilities are either pitiable or inspiring.
- Implement universal design, not just in the architectural environment, but also in the design of curricula so that classes are accessible to all.
- Integrate disability studies across disciplines.
- Enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act, including specific guidance to enable artists' colonies, arts educators, and presenters to think of access for performers and presenters, as well as for the audience.
- Bring the conversation about disability into the mainstream by networking with state and local arts agencies, rather than having it occur in isolated sessions.
- Have artists and arts administrators with disabilities serve not only as agency staff, but also as panelists for funding application review and policy discussions at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Make certain that the differences between art as a professional path and arts therapy are clarified.
- Ensure that the accreditation bodies for professional preparation programs evaluate access to programs and facilities, as well as recruitment efforts for persons with disabilities as students, faculty, and staff.
- Make disability access a key component of program funding.
- Broadly disseminate information about how individuals with disabilities can pursue artistic careers without jeopardizing much-needed benefits, especially healthcare.



Summit participants at the Banquet: (back row, Virginia R. Sanders, Eileen Carpinella, Paula Terry, Amy Kitchener, (front) Carmen Boston, and Jack Catlin. Photo by Katie Lyles Levy



- See disability as part of our country’s tradition of diversity, and challenge the disability arts community to represent the full range of persons with disabilities.

Working Group participants felt that the funding community can play a vital role by making accessibility a key component of supported programs and offering incentives for hiring disabled artists and creating model projects. They recognized that existing programs such as PASS (Social Security’s Plan for Achieving Self-Support) need to be better publicized; a website should be developed to educate people with disabilities about how to pursue an artistic career without jeopardizing their healthcare benefits. In general, the Internet is a powerful tool that can be used for resource collection and dissemination. Artists’ colonies and community-based arts centers also need information about access, and steps should be taken to ensure they are in compliance with state and federal access codes. The media access working group spoke for many participants with one of its points, “I want a place at the table, and I’m hungry!”

Specific recommendations from the **creative writing** working group (chaired by writer Anne Finger and facilitated by Wayne Cook, Accessibility Coordinator for the California Arts Council) were:

- Interface with a small number of prominent creative writing programs to create greater understanding of disability issues.
- Approach the University of Iowa about the possibility of creating an MFA writing program with an emphasis in disability studies, as well as the establishment of a low-residency MFA program with an emphasis in disability writing.
- Encourage disability studies programs and creative writing programs at the college and university level to network and communicate.
- Work with critics and journalists so that disability is no longer contained within the framework of tragedy and pity.
- Train educators through panels and presentations at annual conferences of the AWP (Associated Writing Programs) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication.
- Establish a journal, possibly online, focused on creative writing by people with disabilities.
- Develop a resource directory of disabled writers and teachers, perhaps working with the existing directory maintained by Poets & Writers.
- Initiate a summer creative writing institute for youth that would put disabled writers “in the pipeline” from the start.
- Develop a national mentoring program for young people with disabilities modeled on those for other minority groups.
- Create scholarship programs targeted for individuals with disabilities who want to pursue a career in the arts.

The **media** working group (chaired by Lawrence Carter-Long, disTHIS Film Series & Disabilities Network of NYC, and facilitated by Deborah Lewis, Consultant for Arts Access Now) proposed that the field:

- Work with disabled student services programs on college and university campuses so they become hubs of disability culture.
- Educate trade organizations about the potentials of artists with disabilities and the need for integration and non-discrimination.
- Identify specific companies and corporations to partner with for model programs.
- Encourage established artists to act as allies and influence decision makers.
- Make sure that applications and tools used in the media can be utilized by all.
- Tell the stories, traditions, and history of disability arts and culture to government, non-profit agencies, and for-profit businesses. In particular, there is a need to shift the discourse on disability so that a new paradigm is put in place in which disability is “hip, cool, and chic.”

The **design** working group (chaired by Elaine Ostroff, Founding Director of the Institute for Human Centered Design, and facilitated by Gay Hanna, Executive Director for the National Center for Creative Aging) recommended that the field:

- Educate broadly about the potential of careers in design, beginning with parents of disabled children and moving on to high school guidance counselors, counselors in community colleges, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and professors.
- Ensure that design studios, in both educational and professional settings, are truly accessible, i.e., usable by individuals with varied disabilities.
- Set up internships, fellowships, and advanced diplomas for students with disabilities.
- Design new technologies that follow the principles of universal design.
- Encourage the NEA’s Design Program to address the concept of universal design within its funding criteria and include designers with disabilities on application review and policy panels.
- Encourage state arts councils to address the concept of universal design within their funding criteria, include design disciplines within their funding opportunities, and include designers with disabilities on application review and policy panels.
- Develop career paths in design for persons with disabilities beginning with vocational technical schools and community colleges.

The **performing arts** working group (co-chaired by John McEwen, Executive Director of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, and Mary Verdi-



Media working group discuss and prepare recommendations.  
Photo by Paula Terry





(Top) Fred Michael Beam comments on performing arts working group recommendations. Photo by Paula Terry



(Bottom) Sharon Jensen introduces speakers at the Post-Show dinner. Photo by Paula Terry

Fletcher, President/Founding Artistic Director of The Dancing Wheels Company & School, and facilitated by Olivia Raynor, Director of the National Arts and Disability Center and Tarjan Center) reported two major overarching themes: a focus on youth and an insistence that disabled people need to be present within every discussion of diversity. They suggested that the field:

- Initiate a national youth summit for persons with disabilities interested in pursuing careers in the arts.
- Provide scholarships specifically targeted to young artists with disabilities.
- Develop projects that demonstrate evidence-based best practices as tools for raising the awareness of performing arts faculty concerning a wide variety of access issues, including accessible classes, facilities, and policies.
- Better educate the theater and media industries about the importance of deaf actors and actors with disabilities portraying characters with disabilities and without disabilities. If there is a role written with a disability, an actor with that disability should be given first consideration if the actor is qualified for the role. Sometimes actors without disabilities are hired to play these roles although there are qualified actors with disabilities available.
- Establish a national information clearinghouse of best practices for adapting performing arts education.
- Make access for students with disabilities part of the college accreditation process.
- Challenge the community of artists with disabilities to embrace diversity, not only in terms of ethnicity but also from within different segments of the disability community.
- Enhance the enforcement of the ADA by state arts agencies; have ADA coordinators conduct site visits and offer constituents specific resources and techniques for optimizing access.
- Disseminate the tactics other persons with disabilities have used to break into the performing arts field, as well as initiate a “know your rights” campaign. One way to share this information would be through a video oral history project—an especially potent tool for preserving language in the Deaf community.
- Network and work with unions on what they can do to encourage access.
- Educate producers and directors, especially at conferences such as those held by the Performing Arts Alliance, Dance USA, and the International Council of Fine Arts Deans.
- Ensure that disabled artists and companies with disabled artists appear on main stages.



The **visual arts** working group (chaired by Beth Ziebarth, Director of Accessibility for The Smithsonian Institution, and facilitated by Stephanie Moore, Director of Visual Arts for VSA arts) reported that while the cluster of careers under visual arts was very broad, the group mostly looked at fine arts, and further noted that many of the recommendations echoed those made at the 1998 Forum. They advocated that the field:

- Educate vocational rehabilitation programs, colleges, and universities about the need some disabled artists have for studio assistants.
- Use the [Access to Design Professions](#)<sup>8</sup> initiative (developed by the NEA with the Institute for Human Centered Design) as a model for increasing access to training and careers in the visual arts field for individuals with disabilities. This would include an e-mentoring program for students, outreach to institutions of higher learning, and key-informant research to learn from successful artists with disabilities. Introduce youth with disabilities to possible careers and establish apprenticeship programs for artists with disabilities.
- Realize that arts education that addresses the needs of disabled people and highlights their contributions can have a ripple effect; those who take the classes will go on to careers in many other fields, such as history and criticism. One example that was offered is the Arts Practice Department at the University of California at Berkeley, where one individual faculty member with a disability, Katherine Sherwood, has been able to raise the profile and discourse around disability arts.

## Performances

During the Summit, the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage hosted two free performances for the public. On July 22nd, the Heidi Latsky Dance Company presented excerpts from *Gimp*. The July 23rd Millennium Stage performance was *Flying Solo: Monologues by Five Deaf Performers*.

(Left) Talkback session following excerpts from *Gimp* by Heidi Latsky Dance on the Millennium Stage, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Photo by Paula Terry

(Right) Tim McCarty and Willy Conley following *Flying Solo: Monologues* by Five Deaf Performers on the Millennium Stage, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Photo by Paula Terry





Michelle Banks performs in *Flying Solo: Monologues* by Five Deaf Performers on the Millennium Stage, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Photo by Paula Terry

## Conclusion

The Summit concluded as Paula Terry, Director of NEA's AccessAbility Office, and Darrell Ayers, Vice President for Education at the Kennedy Center, recognized the many individuals and organizations that planned, supported, and convened the Summit.

This gathering was an exciting opportunity for artists, arts administrators, personnel from state and federal agencies, and academics to come together to strategize about ways to enhance the participation of artists with disabilities in the professional arts world. Just as the previous Forum set the foundation for a series of innovative programs that have raised the profile of artists and arts administrators with disabilities, the concrete recommendations put forward by the working groups will be disseminated among Summit partners and through postings on the NEA and Kennedy Center websites. They should provide a framework for planning and further action by the partnership and the field at large.

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1 <http://www.bls.gov/SOC>

2 <http://www.vsarts.org/x630.xml>

3 <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/2009NEASummit/papers.html>

4 <http://www.yourtickettowork.com>

5 As defined in the study itself, “disability art” refers to the creative work by people with disabilities that reflects a disability experience, either in content or form. This creative expression can be found in every artistic media from the performing arts, literature, and visual arts to comic books, film, and design. Disability art has played a key role in articulating what disability means—politically, personally, and aesthetically. As such, disability art is considered an integral aspect of both the disability civil rights movement and “disability culture,” or the self-consciously created community of diverse disabled people (in terms of impairment type, race, class, gender, and sexuality) who nevertheless share certain experiences, values, and perspectives. Disability art across media shares themes that have helped to shape disability culture: an engagement with political issues relevant to people with disabilities, a challenge to stereotypes, a focus on the lived experience of disability, and the development of alternative aesthetics based on the particularities of the bodies and minds of people with disabilities (Dr. Carrie Sandahl, Associate Professor, Department of Disability and human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago).

6 <http://www.adaptenv.org/index.php?articleid=166&option=Resource>

7 <http://www.adaptiveenvironments.org/index.php?option=Project&Itemid=132>

8 <http://www.adaptiveenvironments.org/index.php?Itemid=37&option=Project>





Riva Lehrer and  
Sunaura Taylor.  
Photo by Mimi Ho



# APPENDIX 1

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## Task Force Members

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VSA Arts  
Washington, DC

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John F. Kennedy Center  
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(in memoriam)  
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*\* denotes member of the  
Executive Committee*

# APPENDIX 2

## Summit Agenda

### National Summit on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities | July 22–24, 2009

#### WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2009

##### 2:00 – 3:00 PM: Terrace Gallery

###### Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Darrell Ayers, Vice President of Education, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- Patrice Walker Powell, Acting Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts
- Soula Antoniou, President, VSA arts
- Richard Balkus, Associate Commissioner, Program Development and Research, Social Security Administration
- Faith McCormick, Acting Commissioner, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The Honorable Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- RoseAnn M. Ashby, Senior Policy Analyst, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education

##### 3:00 – 4:15 PM: Terrace Gallery

###### Art Careers Panel

Chair: Sandra Gibson, President, Association of Performing Arts Presenters

- Visual Arts: Riva Lehrer, Curator, Access Living of Chicago
- Theater: Aaron Kubey, Executive Director/President, National Theater of the Deaf
- Literary: Stephen Kuusisto, Professor, Department of English, University of Iowa
- Dance: Judith Smith, Artistic Director, AXIS Dance Company
- Design: Jack Catlin, FAIA, Partner, LCM Architects

##### 4:30 – 5:45 PM: Atrium

###### Reception

##### 6:00 – 7:00 PM: Grand Foyer

###### Millennium Stage Performance

Heidi Latsky Dance Company with excerpts from “Gimp”



## **THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2009**

### **9:00 – 9:30 AM: Atrium**

#### **Continental Breakfast**

### **9:30 – 10:15 AM: Terrace Gallery**

#### **New Research on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities**

Chair: Sunil Iyengar, Director, Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts

- Dr. Carrie Sandahl, Associate Professor, University of Illinois

### **10:15 – 11:45 AM: Terrace Gallery**

#### **Breakthroughs & Accomplishments**

Introduction: Jonathan Katz, CEO, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Chair: Don Ehman, Program Officer and Access Coordinator, New Jersey State Council on the Arts

- Statewide Forums:
- Dr. Olivia Raynor, Director, National Arts and Disability Center and Tarjan Center
- Celia Hughes, Executive Director, VSA arts of Texas
- Eric McGehearty, Artist
- Mentorships/Internships:
- Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- Mimi Smith, Producing Artistic Director, Amaryllis Theatre Company/VSA arts of Pennsylvania

- Christopher Imbrosciano, Actor
- Access to Design:
- Elaine Ostroff, Founding Director, Institute for Human Centered Design
- Daniel Hunter, Co-Director, Access to Design Professions, Institute for Human-Centered Design
- Paul Mushrush, Architecture Draftsperson

### **11:45 AM – 12:00 PM Break**

### **12:00 PM – 1:30 PM: Atrium**

#### **Summit Banquet**

Remarks: Bill O'Brien, Deputy Chairman for Grants & Awards, National Endowment for the Arts

- Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Arts, Culture and Disability Policy
- Victoria Ann Lewis, Founding Director, Other Voices, Mark Taper Forum, University of Redlands

### **1:45 – 3:00 PM: Terrace Gallery**

#### **Education and Training Conversations**

Chair: Steve Peters, President, Association for Theatre in Higher Education

- Jurg Koch, Assistant Professor, Dance Program, University of Washington, Seattle & Yulia Arakelyan, Dancer

- Israel Hicks, Chairman and Artistic Director, Theater Arts Department, Rutgers University & Christopher Roberts, Producing Artistic Director, SteppingStone Theatre Company
- Riva Lehrer, Curator, Access Living, and Assistant Professor, School of the Arts Institute of Chicago, & Sunaura Taylor, Artist

### 3:00 – 3:15 PM Break

### 3:15 – 4:00 PM: Terrace Gallery

#### Social Security & Work Incentives

Chair: Judith Smith, Artistic Director, AXIS Dance Company

- Susan Wilschke, Director, Office of Program Evaluation, Social Security Administration
- Joseph Razes, Director, Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Social Security Administration
- John Spears, Outreach Coordinator, Illinois Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities, Health and Family Services for Illinois

### 4:00 – 5:00 PM

#### Working Group Sessions

Facilitator: Brewster Thackeray, Portfolio Director, Public Outreach & Director of Disability Group, AARP

#### Design (North Atrium Foyer):

- Chair: Elaine Ostroff, Founding Director, Institute for Human Centered Design

- Facilitator: Gay Hanna, Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging
- Scribes: Jim Nulty, President and CEO, VSA arts of Indiana & Don Ehman, Program Officer—Artists' Services and AccessCoordinator, New Jersey State Council on the Arts

#### Performing Arts (Terrace Gallery):

- Co-Chairs: John McEwen, Executive Director, New Jersey Theatre Alliance & Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/ Founding Artistic Director, The Dancing Wheels Company & School
- Facilitator: Olivia Raynor, Director, National Arts and Disability Center and Tarjan Center
- Scribes: Marjorie Neset, Executive Director, VSA arts of New Mexico & Diane Williams, Arts Industry Director & Accessibility Coordinator, Mississippi Arts Commission

#### Media (Atrium):

- Chair: Lawrence Carter-Long, disTHIS Film Series & Disabilities Network of NYC
- Facilitator: Deborah Lewis, Consultant, Arts Access Now
- Scribes: Ruth Lubbers, Executive Director, VSA arts of Utah & Sally Van De Water, Program Associate and Access Coordinator, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation

#### Creative Writing (Atrium):

- Chair: Anne Finger, Writer
- Facilitator: Wayne Cook, Accessibility Coordinator, California Arts Council



Braille

- Scribes: Jon Skaalen, Program Coordinator, VSA arts of Minnesota & Molly Thomas-Hicks, Literature Specialist, National Endowment for the Arts

#### **Visual Arts** (South Atrium Foyer):

- Chair: Beth Ziebarth, Director of Accessibility, The Smithsonian Institution
- Facilitator: Stephanie Moore, Director of Visual Arts, VSA arts
- Scribes: Eileen Carpinella, Executive Director, Young Audiences of Connecticut & Carmen Boston, Arts Education Manager, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

#### **6:00 – 7:00 PM: Grand Foyer**

##### **Millennium Stage Performance**

Flying Solo: Monologues by Five Deaf Performers

(Post Show Talk Back from 7:00 to 7:30 PM at the Millennium Stage)

#### **7:15 – 8:45 PM: Atrium**

##### **Post-Show Light Fare**

Introductions: Sharon Jensen, Executive Director, Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts

Keynote Speakers:

- Alana Yvonne Wallace, Vocalist, Actor and Dancer
- Ray Bradford, I AM PWD Campaign (Inclusion in the Arts & Media of People with Disabilities)

## **FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009**

### **8:30 – 9:00 AM: Atrium**

#### **Continental Breakfast**

### **9:00 – 11:00 AM: Terrace Gallery**

#### **Job Support & Issues**

Chair: John Kemp, Principal, Powers, Pyles, Sutter & Verville PC and Executive Director and General Counsel, U.S. Business Leadership Network

- Beth Bienvenu, Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- Amy Kitchener, Executive Director, Alliance for California Traditional Arts
- Beverlee Stafford, Executive Director, National Rehabilitation Association
- Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/ Founding Artistic Director, The Dancing Wheels Company & School
- Gay Hanna, Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging
- Jason Olsen, Social Insurance Specialist/Office of Employment Support Programs, Social Security Administration
- Liz Ortiz-Mackes, Casting Director/ Producer, Casting Solutions
- Rose Ann Cleveland, Executive Director, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

## 11:00 – 11:15 AM Break

## 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM: Terrace Gallery

### Issue Papers

Chair: Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, Acting Director of Local Arts Agencies' Services, Americans for the Arts

- Legal Developments: Carrie Griffin Basas, Assistant Professor, College of Law, University of Tulsa
- Funding: Deborah Lewis, Consultant, Arts Access Now
- How Technology Impacts Careers in the Arts: William Clymer, Associate Professor, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology
- Higher Education: Carrie Sandahl, Associate Professor, University of Illinois

## 12:15 – 12:30PM: Terrace Gallery

Instructions for Developing Findings and Recommendations

Facilitator: Brewster Thackeray, Portfolio Director, Public Outreach & Director of Disability Group, AARP

## 12:30 – 2:00 PM: Atrium (pick up box lunches)

### Working Group Lunch and Sessions

**Design** (North Atrium Foyer):

- Chair: Elaine Ostroff, Founding Director, Institute for Human Centered Design

- Facilitator: Gay Hanna, Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging
- Scribes: Jim Nulty, President and CEO, VSA arts of Indiana & Don Ehman, Program Officer—Artists' Services and Access Coordinator, New Jersey State Council on the Arts

**Performing Arts** (Terrace Gallery):

- Co-Chairs: John McEwen, Executive Director, New Jersey Theatre Alliance & Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/Founding Artistic Director, The Dancing Wheels Company & School
- Facilitator: Olivia Raynor, Director, National Arts and Disability Center and Tarjan Center
- Scribes: Marjorie Neset, Executive Director, VSA arts of New Mexico & Diane Williams, Arts Industry Director & Accessibility Coordinator, Mississippi Arts Commission

**Media** (Atrium):

- Chair: Lawrence Carter-Long, disTHIS Film Series & Disabilities Network of NYC
- Facilitator: Deborah Lewis, Consultant, Arts Access Now
- Scribes: Ruth Lubbers, Executive Director, VSA arts of Utah & Sally Van De Water, Program Associate and Access Coordinator, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation





**Creative Writing (Atrium):**

- Chair: Anne Finger, Writer
- Facilitator: Wayne Cook, ADA/504 Coordinator, California Arts Council
- Scribes: Jon Skaalen, Program Coordinator, VSA arts of Minnesota & Molly Thomas-Hicks, Literature Specialist, National Endowment for the Arts

**Visual Arts (South Atrium Foyer):**

- Chair: Beth Ziebarth, Director of Accessibility, The Smithsonian Institution
- Facilitator: Stephanie Moore, Director of Visual Arts, VSA arts
- Scribes: Eileen Carpinella, Executive Director, Young Audiences of Connecticut & Carmen Boston, Arts Education Manager, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

**2:00 – 2:15 PM Break**

**2:15 – 4:00 PM: Terrace Gallery**

**General Session, Working Groups' Presentations:**

Facilitator: Brewster Thackeray, Portfolio Director, Public Outreach & Director of Disability Group, AARP

**4:00 – 4:15 PM: Terrace Gallery**

**Next Steps & Closing Remarks**

Paula Terry, Director, AccessAbility Office, National Endowment for the Arts











NATIONAL  
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FOR THE ARTS



Office of Disability  
Employment Policy



Administration on Developmental Disabilities