

**A.R.T.S.**  
**Adaptive art. Respite. & Therapeutic play. Services.**

**Purpose Of Request:**

This grant will be used to support small staff to student ratio, offer student scholarships, expand programs/staffing, and purchase art supplies for Adaptive Clay Classes and Adaptive Art Camps.

**Statement Of Need:**

A.R.T.S and Little Bear Pottery call the Kearsarge/Lake Sunapee Region home. Our summer camp program is nestled in a log cabin on a winding dirt road in North Sutton, NH. Not far is our year round studio in the heart of the boutiques and coffee shops of New London, NH and the picturesque Lake Sunapee, towered over by Mount Sunapee and Mount Kearsarge. People travel to our area year-round for the many activities that each season boasts: boating in the summer, hiking in the fall, and skiing in the winter, to name a few. Spring brings mud season and black flies, a time when we locals are left to ourselves. Regardless of how popular our region is for tourists, the local population lives out the joys and the challenges of daily life just like everyone else in the world. With that comes the challenges of raising children with disabilities while living at least 45 minutes from a city large enough to offer extensive services, respite opportunities and/or therapies for our disabled children. This can leave even the parent in the most idyllic of settings feeling frustrated, exhausted and alone.

There are not a lot of extracurricular activities available to children with special needs and their families. A.R.T.S. offers children with cognitive, behavioral, emotional & physical disabilities the opportunity to experience the therapeutic benefits of various art mediums while having fun creating functional art projects. The diagnoses of the children currently involved in A.R.T.S. programs include ADHD, Anxiety, Asperger's, Autism, Cardiac conditions, Cerebral Palsy, Depression & Traumatic Brain Injury. In general, these children are incredibly bright and often gifted artistically and musically. Often they struggle with expressing themselves verbally, have sensory & motor planning issues, and have difficulty engaging with peers. A.R.T.S. uses a strength based approach, helping children with disabilities to find their strengths and build on them. Our staff works to meet each child where they are at, even when that may vary day to day or moment to moment. Our goal is to create functional art projects that are adapted to each child's abilities, taking into consideration individual challenges. Creating with clay and various art mediums is a sensory experience, builds upper body strength & coordination, practices motor planning, challenges the imagination, teaches mental flexibility and promotes multitasking. The goal is for each child to experience these benefits while having fun creating with clay, paint, fabric and other mediums. Small group sessions and summer art camps are offered to encourage interactive & cooperative play skills, while practicing appropriate peer interactions. The instructor, Cynthia Best, has worked as a pediatric physical therapist for 20 years and a ceramic artist for the last 9 years. Therefore, she is able to effectively carryover and incorporate each child's behavioral and therapeutic goals into each session. Parents share with the instructor the child's current behavioral and therapeutic goals for home, school and in PT, OT and Speech services.

Small group sessions and Adaptive Art Camps encourage interactive and cooperative play skills with peers. Both a senior apprentice and a junior apprentice in Art Camp serve as mentors, peer role models and camp assistants.

The additional purpose of A.R.T.S is to provide the families of these children with opportunities for support, respite, and resources. Parents are often overwhelmed and unsure where to start once their child has been identified with special needs. In addition, it's hard to know what is available at home, school and in the community for these families and their children. Our goal is to offer a "Resource Corner", a "Lending Library", a place to meet, and a forum for support. Most of the families involved in A.R.T.S. Are financially strapped and don't have extra funds to obtain services beyond medical care for their special needs child. We offer sliding fee scales, small camp scholarships and have even bartered with parents in an effort to not deny any child services.

### **Summary Of Proposed Work:**

Adaptive art. Respite. & Therapeutic play. Services. (A.R.T.S.) offers Adaptive Clay Classes for children with special needs; Respite opportunities for parents and caregivers; and Therapeutic play at summer Adaptive Art Camps. Adaptive Clay Classes for children with special needs provide a 1 on 1 session with a pediatric physical therapist turned ceramic artist. Projects are adapted to each child's abilities, taking into consideration individual challenges. Creating with clay is a sensory experience, builds upper body strength and coordination, challenges the imagination, teaches mental flexibility and promotes multitasking. The goal is for each child to experience these benefits while having fun creating functional projects out of clay. Other art mediums, such as woodworking, fabric art, & painting are also added to individual sessions based on each child's interests and goals. Children can also work with 1 instructor and 1 peer to encourage interactive and cooperative play skills. All ages are welcome. Cost is \$30 for a 1 hour individual or small group session. A sliding fee scale is available to families if needed. Some families work with Pathways and Community Bridges for assistance with funding.

Adaptive Art Camps for children with special needs are run throughout the summer months. Summer camps are ideally designed for children with special needs ages 4 to 10 years old. Exceptions are considered. Due to the current size of our space and staff, a maximum of 4 children is accepted per session. Camps are held for 2 hours a day, 3 days a week for a two week session. A day at camp begins with opening circle to introduce the "theme of the day" and encourage appropriate greeting skills with peers. "Brain Gym" activities are then performed to awaken the body and the brain improving alertness and attention. Art projects are next combining individual projects as well as group projects for cooperative play. Snack & Story Time provides a time to rest and refuel. Both the snack and story are related to the day's theme. The camp day ends with outdoor sensorimotor and gross motor play, followed by closing circle. Camp is run by Cindy Best, a pediatric physical therapist turned ceramic artist. She is assisted by Carol MacDonald, a retired teacher and "Snack & Story Lady". Other health care professionals and artists are subcontracted to assist, and a senior & junior apprentice serve as both a

mentor to the children and a camp assistant. Camp art projects are adapted to each child's abilities. Creating with various types of clay, paint & art materials offers each child an opportunity for sensory play and creative curiosity. Projects are designed to challenge the imagination, stimulate speech, encourage interactive play and social interaction with peers. The goal is for each child to experience these benefits while creating functional art projects. The cost for the two week camp session is \$250 and includes all art project materials, firing of clay projects, instruction, sensorimotor play activities and snack. A sliding fee scale is offered to families if needed. Our goal is to offer scholarships to children whose families cannot afford to send them to camp.

This summer, we had 3 returning campers and 3 new campers to Adaptive Art Camp, all ranging in age from 9 to 11 years old and all falling somewhere on the autism spectrum.. Next summer all 6 will be returning campers. We have modified our 2012 summer camp program to meet the needs of these older campers by changing the format to a 5 day a week, one week program. The cost will remain the same, \$250, but the format will focus on older peer interaction skills and a "middle school" format to the camp day/week to help these students in their transition to Middle School in the fall. In addition, we have been scaling up the art projects for these older students to introduce not only art skills, but recreational skills. New additions this summer were "Photography Day", "Fishing Day", "Camping Day" and "Rock Band Day". We had a guest photographer, musician and fisherman join us to share their talents with our campers. We then created multimedia art projects based on these themes. We also had a camp fire and sleepover on the last day of camp and introduced a "Counselor In Training" position filled by a previous camper. He started as "sleep over staff" this summer and will be a full time paid C.I.T. at next summer's art camp. The goal is to work these older campers into this "Counselor In Training" position as a "first summer job" opportunity.

During individual, small group and camp sessions indoor and outdoor space is available to parents to relax, work, read or borrow a book from the "Resource Corner". This space also provides families with a place to meet, have time with a sibling or have play group with other parents and siblings. Parents are also welcome to drop off their child and go exercise or run errands. Our goal is to offer to parents resources, help them to connect with other families for support, share strategies, and eventually provide educational workshops and art classes to parents while their child is taking a lesson or participating in camp. Our Collaborative Parent Support Group was created to help meet this goal for caregivers.

### **Three Expected Outcomes Of This Work:**

1. For children with disabilities to participate in after school and camp experiences that benefit them therapeutically and help them identify and develop their strengths.
2. Improved interactive and cooperative play skills with peers.
3. Respite time and support for parents, caregivers and siblings.

### **List Of Board Members:**

Cynthia Best

Carol MacDonald  
Susan Cowan Morse  
Frederick Best  
Sara Lewis

**Organization Mission Statement:**

A.R.T.S. mission is to give children with special needs the opportunity to create functional art projects while encouraging therapeutic goals, socialization with peers, and respite for caregivers.

**Organization Description:**

A.R.T.S. offers adaptive clay classes and summer art camps to children with special needs. Our individual and small group programs service children of all ages and levels of ability. These programs are offered after school, as well as during the school day for younger and home schooled children. Our summer camp program groups children with similar ages and therapeutic goals into the same session. As we grow, it is our goal to offer more than 2 summer camp sessions so a larger population of children can benefit. We'd also like to expand to offer painting, fabric art and basic musical instrument instruction classes to children with special needs during the school year and be able to financially support staff to offer these mediums.

In addition to serving children with special needs, it is our goal to offer their care givers and parents opportunities to meet, support one another, share strategies and resources, and connect with other families. Indoor and outdoor space is available to families during the child's clay class or art camp session. Currently, parents use this space to quietly get some work done, talk with other parents over coffee, hold an informal play group with younger siblings, or read books, articles or postings for upcoming workshops in the "Resource Corner". Our in town location for year round classes allows parents to drop off their children for class, and run errands. This location is attached to Little Brook Art Gallery which collaborates with Little Bear Pottery and A.R.T.S. to offer other art mediums, social interaction for students, and Art Show opportunities for all students. Eventually, we hope to offer various art classes and workshops that parents and caregivers can take while their child is taking an adaptive clay class or participating in summer camp.

In September of 2010, A.R.T.S. initiated a Collaborative Parent support Group. The idea is to bring together local organizations working with special needs children and their families to provide parents and caregivers resources and support. The group is held periodically throughout the year at OT in Motion in nearby Sunapee, NH. A.R.T.S. donates it's time to organize the group, advertise meetings and post the Support Group Calendar and resource links on our website [www.artstherapynh.com](http://www.artstherapynh.com). . OT in Motion donates it's space to sponsor the group meetings. The local organizations involved in the collaborative present throughout the year so families can learn about their services and the local resources available to special needs children and families in the area.

In 2011, Cindy Best of A.R.T.S. completed writing a book entitled “Meet Me Where I’m At”. She collaborated with another mother who also has a child on the Autism Spectrum to self publish it. We are awaiting an ISBN number, but have already sold over 30 copies! The book was originally created as a visual tool for Cindy's own son's “tool box”. When he was younger, as a parent she felt like she needed a guide book for his teachers to understand him. As he got older, she wanted him to have a way to advocate for himself, and communicate to his teachers and coaches “this is who I am and how I'm wired. If you can get this about me, we will have a positive year”. The layout of the book allows any child and parent to decide what pages help them understand themselves. From there, they can design and create a “guide book to your child” to share with family members, teachers and coaches. A portion of the proceeds of this book goes to create an A.R.T.S. Scholarship fund that will provide summer camp scholarships to campers. Ultimately, we'd like to offer this book to larger organizations such as The Doug Flutie Foundation, Autism Speaks and The Asperger's Association as a fundraiser opportunity for their organizations, as well as continue to generate scholarship funds and expand programs at A.R.T.S..